

How Do EFL Students Improve Their Listening Skills Independently? A Self-Regulated Learning Perspective

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Abstract. This study looks at how English as a Foreign Language students improve their listening abilities on their own by using self-regulated learning and being driven by their own interest and enjoyment. As digital media offer more chances for self-directed language learning, it's becoming more important to understand how students use listening on their own, especially in Indonesian English as a Foreign Language settings. This study used a quantitative descriptive approach and sent out an online survey to undergraduate students in the English Education Department. The data that was gathered was looked at using basic statistical methods like counting how often things happened, finding percentages, and calculating average scores. This helped find out what students' listening habits were, the learning strategies they used on their own, how motivated they felt towards listening, and the difficulties they faced while listening. The results show that digital media, especially YouTube, podcasts, and English songs, are very helpful for people who want to practice listening on their own. The findings also indicate that students with higher level of self-regulated learning are more inclined to engage in listening activities autonomously. If students are internally motivated, they have a better chance of continuing to listen regularly, even if they face obstacles along the way such as unfamiliar words or various forms of English. These findings imply that promoting student autonomy and catering for the development of genuine interest in learning English can support Indonesian students in becoming more independent and persevering in their listening learning. This research is beneficial for English teachers in that it encourages them to incorporate listening exercises that students can perform independently by means of digital tools at times outside of the regular class schedule.

Keywords: self-regulated learning; intrinsic motivation; independent listening; EFL students; digital media

1 Introduction

The rapid development of digital technology has altered the way in which EFL learners obtain access to learning materials, in particular for developing their listening competence.

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There is a good real English content to be found these days, thanks to online services such as Youtube, podcasts, music sites, and social media. These are resources that allow students to continue hearing English spoken outside of the classroom, so they can listen and practice on their own, they can do so based on what they like, what they want to learn, and even when they have time. As Torrez (2006) mentions, the advent of digital technology has also resulted in more options for self-directed language learning, and it is now considered an important tool for enhancing the listening abilities of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners (Tsang et al., 2024; Vandergrift, 2007).

Listening is believed to be the most important language skill as it provides learners with authentic language input which serves as a fulcrum for developing their other language skills. Despite the fact that more and more English as a foreign language students still think it is difficult to understand spoken English, the reasons why are they do not be given enough listening practice in class, know not enough words, hear different accents and are confused by the speed of what people speak in real life. Since teaching in a classroom usually does not provide sufficient opportunity for students to engage in an ample amount of listening practice, they are advised to look for additional learning resources elsewhere outside of the school walls. Studies indicate that access to authentic English materials in an out-of-class context contributes to learners' listening and overall language proficiency (Bang & Hiver, 2016; Tsang & Lam, 2024; Wouters et al., 2024).

Their class learning was supervised by out of class its own foreign English Students to be better listening. People are able to choose the educational content that most closely aligns with their interests, prior knowledge, and desired learning outcomes on digital media. Listen to English songs, watch videos, listen to podcasts, and use online resources to practice and learn the language incessantly. Having digital tools at one's disposal does not necessarily ensure that one will learn well. Learners, on the other hand, must be able to take charge of their own learning and feel inspired to practice over long periods of time.

Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) is a theory that sheds light on how learners modulate their own learning activities. Self-regulated learners, Zimmerman (2000) argues, take charge of their own learning by setting their own learning objectives, they are the ones that determine how to learn, they monitor how they are performing and evaluate their own results. Students with self-control tend to be more active in choosing their listening materials, monitoring their understanding, recognizing listening problems, and exploiting or changing learning strategies while listening (Ke, 2014). Researchs have proven that enhancing students' self-regulated learning contributes to students' higher performance in listening as well as improves students' awareness of their learning (Zeng & Goh, 2018).

In addition to learning strategies, learners' motivation is also essential to keep them practicing independently on listening. According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2020), intrinsic motivation affects the learners to participate in the learning activities as they find it fun, meaningful, and personally rewarding. More intrinsically motivated students seem to be more consistent in their listening practice, in spite of problems with unfamiliar words or varieties of English they find difficult to understand. Therefore, self-regulated learning and intrinsic motivation are two key factors that facilitate autonomous listening development for EFL learners.

Although previous studies have examined autonomous listening, digital media exposure, self-regulated learning, and intrinsic motivation in EFL contexts, these aspects have often been examined separately or in different educational settings. This leaves a gap in understanding how digital media use, self-regulated learning strategies, and intrinsic motivation are reflected together in students' independent listening practices. This gap is particularly relevant in the Indonesian EFL context, where English is generally learned as a foreign language and students may have fewer opportunities to encounter English in their everyday environment outside formal instruction. Therefore, examining how Indonesian EFL

students practice listening independently can provide a more context-specific understanding of how learners use available digital resources, regulate their learning, and maintain motivation outside the classroom.

Therefore, from the perspectives of Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT), this study investigates how Indonesian EFL students develop their English listening skills independently. Specifically, the study examines students' independent listening practices, self-regulated learning strategies, and intrinsic motivation, as well as the digital media they use and the challenges they encounter. The study contributes to the literature by providing a context-specific description of independent listening practices among Indonesian EFL students and by highlighting the importance of combining digital access, self-regulation, and intrinsic motivation in supporting autonomous listening. The findings are also expected to provide practical insights for English lecturers seeking to encourage more purposeful and sustainable independent listening practices outside the classroom.

2 Method

2.1 Research Design

This study used a quantitative descriptive approach to examine how EFL students improve their listening abilities on their own using digital media. A descriptive quantitative method was chosen because it helps researchers explain how people listen, the strategies they use to learn on their own, their natural interest in learning, and the difficulties they face when listening without guidance. The study looked at how participants answered questions and used descriptive statistics to show their responses, but it didn't look into how the different factors might affect each other.

2.2 Participants

This study involved 16 undergraduate students from the English Education Department. The participants were selected using purposive sampling based on specific criteria relevant to the study. They were active undergraduate students who had experience practicing English listening independently outside the classroom. The participants were from semesters 6 and 8, aged 20 years and above, and consisted of 10 female students (62.5%) and 6 male students (37.5%). Among them, 6 students (37.5%) were from semester 6 and 10 students (62.5%) were from semester 8. The questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms.

2.3 Research Instrument

Table 1. Result Cronbach's Alpha

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Independent Listening Practices	0.716	Acceptable
Self-Regulated Learning	0.764	Acceptable
Intrinsic Motivation	0.787	Acceptable
Overall (15 items)	0.875	Good

The research instrument was a structured online questionnaire designed to collect information about students' independent English listening practices. The questionnaire consisted of several sections covering demographic information, independent listening

practices, self-regulated learning (SRL), intrinsic motivation, digital media use, and listening challenges. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), and was administered through Google Forms. Before distribution, the questionnaire was reviewed by a lecturer to examine the relevance and clarity of the items. However, no separate pilot test was conducted before the questionnaire was administered to the participants. The reliability of the 15 Likert-scale items was assessed using Cronbach's alpha based on the responses of the 16 participants.

2.4 Data Collection Procedure

The data were collected through an online questionnaire using Google Forms. The questionnaire link was distributed to undergraduate students in the English Education Department at Universitas Harapan Bangsa. Before completing the questionnaire, the respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and were asked to participate voluntarily. The respondents completed the questionnaire based on their experiences with independent English listening activities. The responses were then collected and organized for statistical analysis.

2.5 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The analysis included frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations to describe students' independent listening practices, self-regulated learning, intrinsic motivation, digital media use, and listening challenges. The results were presented in tables and figures and interpreted descriptively to identify the patterns observed among the respondents.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

3.1.1 Independent Listening Practices

Table 2. Independent Listening Practices

No.	Statement	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
1	I practice English listening outside the classroom.	3.69	0.95
2	I choose my own English listening materials.	4.31	0.70
3	I allocate time for independent listening practice.	3.31	0.87
4	I practice listening even without classroom assignments.	3.31	0.95
5	I use digital media to practice English listening.	4.38	0.81

The findings indicate that the respondents generally demonstrated positive independent listening practices. The highest mean score was found for using digital media to practice English listening ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 0.81$), followed by choosing their own English listening materials ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.70$). Practicing English listening outside the classroom also showed a relatively high mean score ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 0.95$). Meanwhile, allocating time for independent listening practice and practicing without classroom assignments obtained the same mean score of 3.31, with standard deviations of 0.87 and 0.95, respectively. These

results suggest that the respondents were generally engaged in independent listening activities, particularly through digital media and self-selected materials.

3.1.2 Self-Regulated Learning

Table 3. Self-Regulated Learning

No.	Statement	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
1	I set goals for improving my English listening skills.	3.19	0.91
2	I plan my learning activities before practicing listening.	2.88	1.15
3	I monitor whether I understand the listening material.	3.62	0.72
4	I replay difficult listening materials to understand them better.	3.50	1.10
5	I evaluate my progress after practicing listening.	3.44	0.89

The results show that the respondents used various self-regulated learning strategies during independent listening practice. Monitoring their understanding obtained the highest mean score ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.72$), followed by replaying difficult listening materials ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.10$) and evaluating their learning progress ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 0.89$). Setting learning goals obtained a mean score of 3.19 ($SD = 0.91$). The lowest mean score was found for planning learning activities before practicing listening ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 1.15$). This indicates that respondents tended to monitor and evaluate their listening comprehension, although systematic planning before listening practice was less frequently reported.

3.1.3 Intrinsic Motivation

Table 4. Intrinsic Motivation

No.	Statement	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
1	I enjoy practicing English listening.	3.69	1.08
2	I am motivated to improve my English listening skills.	4.31	0.70
3	I practice English listening because I personally want to.	4.25	0.86
4	I feel satisfied when I successfully understand English listening materials.	4.69	0.60
5	I find English listening activities enjoyable.	3.69	0.95

The findings indicate that the respondents generally demonstrated positive intrinsic motivation toward independent English listening. The highest mean score was found for feeling satisfied when successfully understanding English listening materials ($M = 4.69$, $SD = 0.60$). This was followed by motivation to improve English listening skills ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.70$) and practicing listening based on personal desire ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.86$). Meanwhile, both enjoying English listening practice and perceiving listening activities as enjoyable obtained a mean score of 3.69. Overall, the results indicate that the respondents experienced personal motivation and satisfaction when engaging in independent listening activities.

3.1.4 Digital Media Use and Listening Challenges

The findings show that respondents used various digital platforms for independent English listening practice. YouTube was the most frequently selected platform, reported by 81.3% of respondents, followed by TikTok and English music, both reported by 75.0%. Netflix was used by 56.3% of respondents, followed by Spotify (37.5%), other platforms (18.8%), and

podcasts (12.5%). These findings indicate that respondents mainly relied on easily accessible digital platforms, particularly YouTube, TikTok, and English music, to support their independent listening practice.

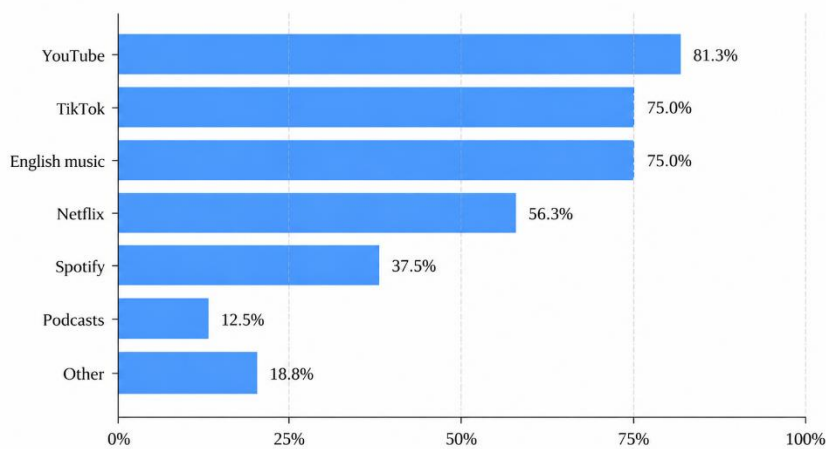


Fig 1. Digital Media Platforms Used for Independent English Listening

The respondents also reported several challenges when practicing English listening independently. Fast speech was the most frequently reported difficulty, experienced by 75.0% of respondents, followed by different English accents (56.3%) and unfamiliar vocabulary (50.0%). Other challenges included difficulty maintaining concentration (25.0%), limited time for practice (18.8%), and internet connection problems (6.3%). No respondents selected the “Other” category. These findings show that although digital media provide opportunities for independent listening practice, respondents still encountered difficulties in processing authentic English input, particularly when dealing with fast speech, unfamiliar accents, and vocabulary.

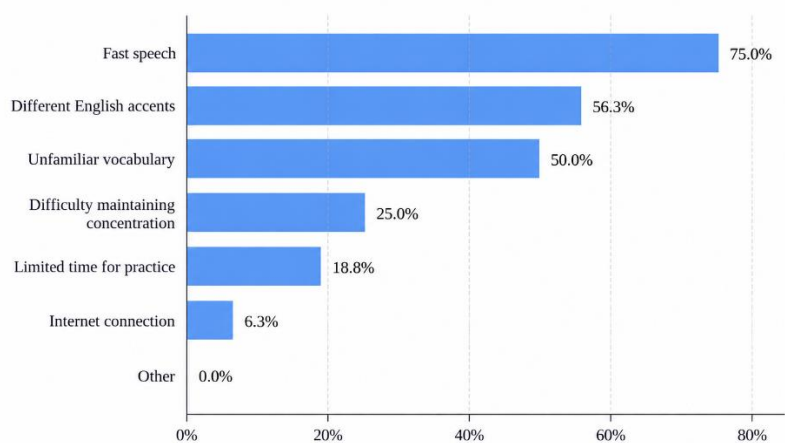


Fig 2. Listening Challenges Experienced During Independent Practice

3.2 Discussion

The findings show that independent English listening practice among the respondents was supported by three main aspects: the use of accessible digital media, the development of self-regulated learning practices, and intrinsic motivation. These aspects appear to work together in creating opportunities for students to engage with English outside formal classroom activities. Rather than depending entirely on teacher-assigned tasks, the respondents reported choosing their own listening materials and using digital platforms based on their interests and accessibility. This pattern is relevant to the Indonesian EFL context, where students may have fewer opportunities to encounter English in everyday communication outside the classroom.

The findings on self-regulated learning indicate that the respondents were more likely to monitor their understanding and repeat difficult listening materials than to make detailed plans for their listening practice. Monitoring understanding received a relatively high mean score ($M = 3.62$), while planning listening activities received the lowest mean score ($M = 2.88$). This pattern can be understood through the concept of self-regulated learning, in which learners actively monitor and evaluate their learning processes. The higher tendency to monitor and repeat difficult materials suggests that students were aware of their listening difficulties and responded to them during practice. However, the lower score for planning indicates that independent learning did not always involve systematic preparation. Students may therefore engage in self-regulated learning through immediate strategies, such as replaying difficult content, even when they do not establish a detailed study schedule beforehand.

Intrinsic motivation was another important aspect of the respondents' independent listening practices. The highest mean score was found for satisfaction when understanding English listening materials ($M = 4.69$), followed by the motivation to improve English listening skills ($M = 4.31$) and the desire to practice because of personal interest ($M = 4.25$). These results indicate that students' engagement was not solely dependent on external requirements. Enjoyment, personal interest, and satisfaction from understanding English appeared to be relevant reasons for continuing listening practice. This finding is consistent with the view of Self-Determination Theory that intrinsic motivation can support learners' willingness to engage in activities because they find them interesting or personally meaningful (Ryan & Deci, 2020). In the context of independent listening, students who experience satisfaction from understanding English may be more willing to continue practicing even when there is no classroom assignment requiring them to do so.

The use of digital media also provides an important explanation for how students accessed English listening materials independently. YouTube was the most frequently used platform (81.3%), followed by TikTok and English music (75.0% each). These platforms provide students with frequent exposure to English content in forms that are easy to access and can be selected according to individual interests. Such accessibility may reduce students' dependence on formal classroom materials and allow them to encounter different types of spoken English in their daily lives. However, the findings also show that access to digital media does not automatically remove listening difficulties. Fast speech was the most frequently reported challenge (75.0%), followed by different English accents (56.3%) and unfamiliar vocabulary (50.0%). This suggests that independent exposure can provide opportunities for practice while simultaneously exposing learners to the complexity of authentic English input.

The combination of digital media use, self-regulated learning, and intrinsic motivation is particularly relevant to the Indonesian EFL setting. Students can access English materials beyond the classroom, but they still need to make decisions about what to listen to, how often to practice, and how to respond when they encounter difficulties. The findings therefore highlight that independent listening is not simply a matter of having access to digital resources. Students also need strategies for managing their learning and sufficient personal

motivation to continue practicing. This perspective supports previous discussions of self-regulated learning and informal digital language learning, which emphasize the active role of learners in managing their own exposure and learning experiences.

From a pedagogical perspective, these findings suggest that lecturers can support students' independent listening by introducing them to a wider range of accessible English-language digital resources and teaching practical listening strategies. Instead of limiting listening activities to classroom materials, lecturers can encourage students to select suitable content from platforms they already use, such as YouTube, music platforms, and short-video applications. Students can also be encouraged to set realistic listening goals, monitor their understanding, replay difficult sections, and reflect on their progress. Such guidance may help students move from casual exposure to more purposeful independent listening practice.

Overall, the findings indicate that students' independent listening practices were shaped by the interaction of access to digital English content, self-regulated learning practices, and intrinsic motivation. Digital platforms provided accessible opportunities for exposure, while SRL helped students manage difficulties and monitor their understanding. At the same time, intrinsic motivation provided a personal reason for continuing to engage with English listening. However, the descriptive nature of this study means that these findings should be interpreted as patterns in the respondents' experiences rather than evidence of causal relationships between the variables.

3.2.1 Pedagogical Implications

These findings have several implications for EFL teaching. Teachers can encourage students to use familiar digital platforms as additional sources of English listening exposure while helping them select materials appropriate to their proficiency levels. Teachers can also introduce simple SRL routines, such as setting a listening goal before practice, monitoring comprehension during listening, and reflecting on progress afterward. In addition, listening materials can gradually expose students to different speaking rates, accents, and vocabulary to prepare them for authentic English input. Such guidance may help students move from simply consuming digital English content toward more purposeful and self-regulated listening practice.

4 Conclusion

This study examined how EFL students engaged in independent English listening practice and the role of digital media, self-regulated learning, and intrinsic motivation in these practices. The findings showed that students commonly used accessible digital platforms, particularly YouTube, TikTok, and English music, to obtain English listening exposure outside the classroom. The respondents also demonstrated self-regulated learning practices, especially in monitoring their understanding and replaying difficult listening materials. In addition, intrinsic motivation was reflected in students' enjoyment, personal interest, and satisfaction when they understood English listening materials.

Despite these opportunities, students still encountered challenges, particularly fast speech, different English accents, and unfamiliar vocabulary. These findings highlight the importance of combining accessible digital resources with appropriate learning strategies and personal motivation when encouraging independent listening practice. For EFL teaching, lecturers can guide students in selecting suitable digital materials, setting realistic listening goals, monitoring their understanding, and reflecting on their progress. Since this study used a descriptive approach with a relatively small sample, the findings describe patterns among the respondents and should not be interpreted as evidence of causal relationships. Future studies could involve larger samples and inferential analyses to examine the relationships

among digital media use, self-regulated learning, motivation, and independent listening more systematically.

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