

EXPLORING STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF THE EXTENSIVE LISTENING ASSIGNMENTS: INSIGHTS FROM EFL LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

Extensive Listening (EL) has been widely used as an approach to support listening development in language learning. This study explores ten university students' experiences in completing EL assignments independently outside the classroom over one semester, focusing on key EL principles such as learner choice, regular listening practice, and meaning-focused understanding. A qualitative approach was employed using open-ended questionnaires, document analysis of students' listening assignments, and semi-structured interviews. The findings show that students demonstrated active engagement through selecting suitable materials, practicing listening regularly, focusing on overall meaning, and responding to the listening task. Students reported positive learning experiences, increased motivation, and greater awareness of their listening development, although challenges related to vocabulary difficulty, time management, and consistency were also identified. The results suggest that EL assignments can support independent learning and meaningful engagement when aligned with learners' needs and preferences, highlighting the importance of designing activities that encourage learners to practice the core principles of EL in authentic learning contexts.

Keywords: Extensive Listening, Listening Assignments, Learner Experiences, Independent Learning, University Students

A. INTRODUCTION

Listening is a fundamental component of language learning, yet it often receives less emphasis in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom compared to other skills such as grammar, reading, or vocabulary (Hermida, 2021). This lack of emphasis may make listening one of the most challenging skills for learners to master (Qiu et al., 2023). Listening is also the foundation for other language skills, as learners first receive input through listening before producing language in speaking or writing (Brown, 2006). Therefore, improving listening instruction remains an important concern in language learning.

One approach gaining attention in listening instruction is EL (Chang & Millett, 2013; Bibby, 2020). EL encourages learners to engage with large amounts of meaningful and enjoyable listening input over time. Learners can select materials based on personal interests, which promotes motivation and learner autonomy (Chang, 2017; Ivone & Renandya, 2019). EL focuses on understanding overall meaning rather than detailed language forms (Schmidt, 2016, as cited in Öztürk & Tekin, 2020). EL activities may take various forms, including teacher-directed listening tasks in class or self-directed listening outside the classroom, as long as they provide opportunities for meaningful listening practice (Renandya & Farrell, 2011).

A related development that further supports the implementation of EL is the rapid growth of digital technology by providing access to diverse resources such as online videos, internet media, and audiobooks (Chang et al., 2018). These resources allow learners to practice listening outside classroom settings, supporting independent learning. Access to abundant comprehensible input helps learners acquire language naturally without strong emphasis on grammar (Su et al., 2021). Exposure to different spoken varieties also helps learners identify main ideas and build confidence in understanding real-life communication (Rusmiati et al., 2024).

Previous studies show that EL can positively influence engagement and motivation. Regular exposure to self-selected materials has been linked to improved participation and learning outcomes (Öztürk & Tekin, 2020; Kristanti & Ni'amah, 2022). Authentic resources like videos, songs, and real-life audio support learners in understanding language use in context (Hapsari & Ratri, 2014). EL may also enhance learners' metacognitive awareness through reflective practices (Gökmen, 2021). Yet, challenges such as comprehension difficulties, technical issues, and fluctuating motivation can still occur (Mandiri et al., 2022).

Despite these findings, most studies focus on learning outcomes or general implementation, rather than examining how learners engage with EL in ways that reflect its core principles. In many cases, tasks are evaluated mainly based on completion or results, without investigating whether learners understand and apply the underlying concepts. To address this gap, this study adopts the principles of EL proposed by Renandya and Jacobs (2016) and Ivone and Renandya (2019). Based on these principles, the study uses five indicators as an analytical framework: (1) choosing suitable and interesting materials, (2) listening frequently and independently, (3) focusing on general meaning rather than details, (4) listening with enjoyment and motivation, and (5) being able to respond or reflect on the content.

Therefore, this study investigates how university students experience EL assignments completed independently outside the classroom over one semester. This study uses open-ended questionnaires, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews. By exploring students' understanding, challenges, preferences, and reflections, the study aims to provide insights for teachers and course designers to develop EL practices that better support learners' needs and learning experiences.

B. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore undergraduate students' experiences with EL assignments in an authentic learning context. The case focused on the implementation of EL assignments in the *Listening for General Communication* course, and how students engaged with these assignments after completing them. A qualitative approach

was selected to capture participants' perceptions, challenges, and preferences through descriptive data rather than numerical analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The participants were 10 third-semester undergraduate students from the English Education program at a public university in Indonesia who had completed EL assignments in the *Listening for General Communication* course during their first semester. Third-semester students were selected because they had recently completed the assignments, allowing them to reflect on their experiences while minimizing recall bias that might occur among students from higher semesters. Students from lower semesters were not included because they were still completing the assignments at the time of data collection. All participants provided informed consent to participate in the study.

All ten participants completed open-ended questionnaires. Participants were also asked whether they were willing to share links to their assignment portfolios hosted on Google Sites. Six students agreed to share their portfolio documents. However, only three portfolios were accessible due to access restrictions. A total of 30 assignments, consisting of ten submissions from each participant across one semester, were analyzed. The same three students were subsequently invited to participate in semi-structured interviews conducted via Google Meet during the semester break, when participants were located in different locations.

Data were collected using three instruments: open-ended questionnaires, students' EL assignment documents, and semi-structured interviews. Each instrument captured students' experiences from different perspectives. The questionnaires provided initial insights into students' perceptions and preferences toward the assignments. The document analysis focused on students' weekly summaries and reflections to examine how they engaged with EL practices throughout the semester. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to further explore students' motivation, enjoyment, and perceived challenges in greater depth. All interviews were conducted with participants' consent and recorded for transcription and analysis.

All data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the six-phase procedure outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), alongside updated guidance on thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2017). The analysis adopted a theory-driven approach in which coding was guided by five pre-determined indicators of EL developed from the principles proposed by Renandya and Jacobs (2016) and Ivone and Renandya (2019). These indicators functioned as an analytical framework to organize and interpret the data systematically and to identify patterns in students' experiences across the data sources.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are organized into five themes: choosing suitable and interesting materials, listening frequently and independently, focusing on general meaning rather than language details, listening with enjoyment and motivation, and being able to respond to or reflect on the content. These themes illustrate how students understand the concept of EL and how they experience the assignments as part of their listening practice.

1. Choosing Suitable and Interesting Materials

Students chose materials for their EL tasks based on their personal preferences, the platforms they used, and the characteristics of videos that supported their understanding. In general, students tended to select topics they liked because this made the tasks feel more interesting and less burdensome. Many students relied on online platforms such as YouTube to search for videos that matched their needs and interests. This freedom encouraged engagement and strengthened students' sense of responsibility for their own learning.

"I felt happy doing the task because I could watch videos." (R2, Interview)

"I felt that the task was easier because we were free to choose any video."
(R3, Interview)

These responses indicate that allowing students to select materials based on their interests supports motivation and engagement. This finding is consistent with Tiven and Nikijuluw (2025), who found that learner autonomy in selecting listening materials increases active participation in the learning process. Similarly, Kholil (2025) emphasizes that student-centered multimedia resources can enhance motivation and language learning outcomes. Besides topic and platform, students also considered video characteristics such as duration and language difficulty. Videos that were too long or contained many unfamiliar words were often avoided because they made comprehension more challenging. This suggests that material selection was influenced not only by interest but also by students' perceptions of input difficulty.

"When I find a lot of new words that I don't understand, I feel like I'm not improving enough in my English practice." (R6, Questionnaire)

This finding supports Nainggolan and Hanifah (2024), who highlight the importance of matching learning materials with learners' abilities and contexts to facilitate listening comprehension. In addition, Hidayah and Gunawan (2025) note that vocabulary limitations, fast speech rate, and unfamiliar accents may hinder understanding, indicating the need for level appropriate materials.

However, flexibility in choosing materials also created challenges because the EL tasks were assigned weekly. Over time, some students experienced difficulty finding new videos that were both interesting and suitable for their proficiency level.

"For me, because this task was given every week, in the middle to the end of the semester it became quite difficult to find new videos that were still easy to understand." (R2, Interview)

In practice, the lecturer provided general themes as guidelines while still allowing students to choose specific content. Nevertheless, several students expressed a preference for greater flexibility in theme selection so that the activity felt more meaningful rather than merely completing an assignment.

"I think it would be better if we could choose the theme ourselves, so we would really watch the videos, not just for the assignment." (R1, Interview)

“In my opinion, the theme should not be fixed, so we can enjoy watching the videos more.” (R3, Interview)

Overall, these findings indicate that material selection in EL involves balancing learner autonomy with appropriate guidance. While freedom of choice enhances engagement and motivation, structured support remains necessary to help students sustain access to suitable and comprehensible listening input throughout the learning process. This pattern reflects the EL principle that learners should be able to select listening materials that are both interesting and appropriate to their level.

2. Listening Frequently and Independently

Students demonstrated varying frequencies in conducting EL outside the classroom, although the activity was generally carried out regularly. Some students reported completing the task once a week as required, while others engaged in listening practice two to three times per week or more as additional practice.

“I always try my best to do the listening outside of the classroom as much as possible and if I have free time, it can be 3 times in a week.” (R6, Questionnaire)

O

n the other hand, some students admitted that they only completed the task once a week and occasionally forgot to finish it on time.

“I do it once a week but sometimes I forget to do it on time.” (R9, Questionnaire)

These responses indicate that although EL was practiced regularly, students showed different levels of consistency. Students' participation was often affected by limited time and other academic responsibilities.

“Sometimes I do not have free time because there are many assignments or other things.” (R1, Questionnaire)

“There was also one week when I did not do it because it was midterm week, and I thought I had already done it, but actually I had not.” (R3, Interview)

The variation in practice frequency suggests that students' engagement in out of class listening activities was influenced by their academic situations. This finding aligns with Yang (2020), who states that contextual factors shape students' learning behaviors in out of class language learning.

The aspect of independence was also evident in how the EL tasks were carried out. The tasks were completed individually, and students selected different video materials based on their own preferences. Most listening activities were conducted at students' residences or outside class hours, indicating that learning extended beyond the classroom setting.

“Once a week in my dorm.” (R7, Questionnaire)

“I usually did the EL tasks outside the classroom about once or twice a week.” (R2, Questionnaire)

These responses show that EL encouraged students to engage with English independently in their own learning environments. This pattern reflects the characteristics of EL, which emphasize independent exposure to language outside formal learning contexts. However, students' independent learning activities did not always develop optimally and were sometimes limited despite the availability of learning resources (Nurchalis et al., 2022).

Overall, students tended to conduct EL independently with frequencies ranging from one to three times per week, including completing the assigned weekly task. While some students maintained consistent practice, time limitations and academics. These patterns indicate that students engaged in listening practice beyond classroom requirements and carried out the EL tasks independently with varying levels of consistency. Similarly, Mulyadi et al. (2024), suggests that online listening assignments can support independent learning, although students' experiences and responses may vary.

3. Focusing on General Meaning Rather than Details

Students showed different ways of processing EL materials. Although their approaches varied, most of them focused on understanding the general idea or main message of the video rather than concentrating on specific language details. This tendency reflects the principle of EL, which emphasizes understanding overall meaning instead of focusing primarily on language form (Setyawan et al., 2022).

"I usually put more attention on the main topic to help me get the idea about the video."
(R8, Questionnaire)

This response indicates that focusing on the main topic helped students build initial understanding of the content before paying attention to other aspects of the video. On the other hand, some students paid closer attention to language details such as vocabulary and keywords during the listening process. However, attention to these details was mainly used to support comprehension of the overall message.

"I mostly paid attention to new vocabulary and keywords because they helped me understand the main topic."
(R2, Questionnaire)

Several students also applied strategies such as pausing and replaying the video when they encountered difficult parts.

"I usually watch the video, and when there are some words that I do not know, I pause it first to find out the meaning. If I still do not understand, I replay the video repeatedly and look up the meaning so that I can understand what it means."
(R1, Interview)

Paying attention to vocabulary supports learners in recognizing words and interpreting meaning, which contributes to listening comprehension (Sari et al., 2026). Similarly, the use of pause and repeat strategies allows students more time to process unclear information and improve understanding of the material (Nuna et al., 2025).

Some students combined both approaches by first focusing on the general meaning and later returning to specific details to clarify their understanding.

"I usually watch the video until the end to find out what it is about and its purpose. After that, I replay it from the beginning to note important keywords and vocabulary that I need for the summary." (R2, Interview)

These variations indicate that students used different strategies to achieve comprehension, yet their overall goal remained consistent, which was understanding the content and meaning of the video. The differences were mainly related to the strategies they used rather than to different learning objectives, showing that EL allowed flexible approaches while maintaining a focus on meaning construction.

4. Listening with enjoyment and motivation

Students generally responded positively to the EL activities. Learning through short videos made the listening process more engaging and less monotonous. The variety of topics and accessible format helped students understand the content in a more relaxed way while also gaining new vocabulary and expressions. Enjoyable learning experiences are known to strengthen students' engagement and persistence in language learning (Sumanto et al., 2025).

"It was fun to learn English through videos." (R2, Questionnaire)

"I feel happy and I get new vocabulary or slang." (R4, Questionnaire)

Students also perceived the activity as manageable because they only needed to watch short videos and write the meaning of the content. This structure made the learning process feel lighter and more useful rather than overwhelming.

"I think the task did not require much effort because we only had to watch short videos and write the meaning of the content, so I really enjoyed it and found it very useful." (R2, Interview)

Beyond enjoyment, students expressed motivation to continue practicing listening. They felt that the activity helped them focus more on how speakers delivered messages and gradually improve their listening ability. The perception of progress can contribute to increased self-confidence and linguistic awareness in language learning (Suratullah et al., 2023).

"I feel that this assignment helps me focus more on the material from certain speakers, so it motivates me to improve my listening skills." (R9, Questionnaire)

Some students also recognized listening as one of their weaker skills, which encouraged them to treat EL as an opportunity for continuous practice.

"Since listening has always been one of my weaknesses, this assignment really helps me learn more. I feel that skipping one would mean losing an opportunity to improve." (R1, Interview)

However, positive experiences did not always occur consistently. When the videos were too academic or contained unfamiliar vocabulary, students felt less confident and sometimes struggled to fully understand the message. Listening difficulties may be influenced not only by learners' readiness but also by the characteristics of the listening materials used (Batubara

& Fatmawa, 2023). Nevertheless, these challenges did not completely reduce students' motivation to continue practicing.

Overall, EL provided both an enjoyable learning experience and a meaningful opportunity for skill development. The positive responses expressed by students highlight how enjoyment and interest can play an important role in sustaining listening engagement in EL activities. A similar study shows that EL can positively influence listening comprehension and enhance learners' confidence in understanding spoken English (Abdurashidovna, 2024).

5. Being Able to Respond to and Reflect on the Content

Most students were able to respond to and reflect on the video content in the EL activity. This ability was evident in the assignments they submitted, which consisted of a summary and a reflection section. Most students were able to restate the main ideas of the video and provide personal responses that remained relevant to the topic discussed.

In the summary section, most students included the main ideas and important information from the videos using their own words. This suggests that students were able to understand the content before rewriting it. Summarizing after listening can support comprehension because learners actively reconstruct meaning from what they hear, which may lead to deeper processing (Khavazi et al., 2018). Therefore, the activity did not only involve listening but also meaning-making through writing.

In the reflection section, students showed their ability to connect the video content with their own thoughts or experiences. The reflections were generally relevant and stayed connected to the main topic. Reflective writing can promote awareness of learning processes and support critical thinking in language learning (Lendrati et al., 2024). This indicates that reflection functioned as part of the learning process that helped students understand the material more deeply.

Students' responses also showed that they were aware of what they gained from the listening activities, particularly vocabulary development.

"... there are usually some words that I don't know yet, so I look them up and it adds to my vocabulary." (R1, Interview)

"... it helps me add vocabulary that I didn't know before." (R3, Interview)

These responses indicate that students actively noticed unfamiliar language and made conscious efforts to learn new words. Such awareness reflects cognitive engagement, where learners monitor and regulate their own learning processes (Zhang, 2020).

Students also reported improvement in understanding spoken English used in real contexts.

"Because the lecturer has started explaining fully in English, I can now gradually understand the meaning of what is being said from practicing EL." (R2, Interview)

In addition, exposure to different accents became part of their learning experience.

"Each video usually has different accents. By listening to various accents, I become more familiar with different pronunciations." (R1, Interview)

These statements suggest that students were not only receiving information but also reflecting on their learning progress and language development.

However, several assignments showed that the summary section was not always fully accurate because some students unintentionally included personal reflections in the summary part. This issue appeared to be related to attention during task completion rather than comprehension difficulties.

“I didn’t realize it. I think it was just because I wasn’t focused, so I ended up writing a reflection instead.” (R3, Interview)

This response indicates that the student understood the difference between summary and reflection, although inconsistencies still occurred during practice.

Overall, most students were able to respond to the listening content by summarizing the main ideas and by expressing personal reflections on the videos. These responses indicate that students did not only understand the information presented but also engaged with the content by reacting to and reflecting on its meaning. However, minor inconsistencies in distinguishing between the summary and reflection sections were still found.

Students’ experiences across the five themes indicate that EL assignments supported learning beyond completing classroom tasks. Through selecting materials, practicing independently, focusing on general meaning, experiencing enjoyment and motivation, and responding to the content, students engaged with listening as an active learning process. These experiences suggest that EL encouraged independent learning habits and helped students develop a deeper understanding of spoken English. However, some challenges remained, particularly in maintaining consistency and organizing understanding during task completion. Overall, the weekly assignment structure was perceived as manageable and supported continuous listening practice.

D. CONCLUSION

This study explored how university students understood and experienced EL through independently completed listening tasks over one semester. The results indicate that students engaged with EL in ways generally aligned with its core principles, such as selecting materials based on interest, practicing listening beyond the classroom, focusing on general understanding, and responding reflectively to content. However, variations in consistency of students’ listening engagement and task completion suggest that completing assignments alone does not automatically lead to full conceptual understanding of EL.

These findings highlight the importance of supporting learners not only in completing listening tasks but also in understanding the learning principles behind them. Providing clearer guidance, reflective opportunities, and varied listening choices may help learners engage more meaningfully with EL practices. By examining students’ experiences over an extended learning period, this study provides insight into how EL is practiced in independent learning contexts and offers considerations for teachers and course designers in developing practices that better align with learners’ needs and actual learning behaviors.

However, this study was limited to a relatively small group of university students within a single course over one semester. Future research could explore EL practices across different institutions, longer learning periods, or varied instructional contexts to gain a deeper understanding of how learners sustain engagement with EL over time.

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