

STUDENTS' SELF-DIRECTION IN LEARNING ENGLISH LISTENING SKILLS AT AN ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY

Muhammad Fajaruddin Rachman*¹, Andi Muhammad Yauri², Nursidah³

^{1,2,3}English Education Program, Faculty of Tarbiyah, Institut Agama Islam Negeri Bone, Indonesia

Author corresponding email*: muhammadfajaruddinrachman18@gmail.com

Abstract

This study explores how students at an Islamic university engage in self-directed learning (SDL) to enhance their English listening skills and what motivates that engagement. Using a qualitative descriptive design, semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven 6th–8th semester English majors (June 16–17, 2025). Data were transcribed, coded, and member-checked. Findings show that students set academic/professional goals (e.g., TOEFL/IELTS, postgraduate study, employability) as well as social/personal goals (e.g., reducing insecurity, building confidence). They select authentic, accessible materials YouTube, podcasts/TED Talks, films, songs, TikTok and employ repetition, note-taking, shadowing, and self-evaluation (e.g., prediction tests), with technology functioning as a central enabler. Key challenges include wavering motivation, focus and consistency, time constraints, and distracting environments; feedback from lecturers/peers and perseverance (personal drive, family support, future aspirations) help sustain progress. Intrinsic (interest, enjoyment, competitiveness) and extrinsic factors (exams, career targets, lecturer cues, peer influence) jointly shape SDL. The study concludes that SDL is vital for listening development when autonomy is supported by purposeful goals, strategic routines, constructive feedback, and technology use. Implications include designing autonomy-oriented tasks, guiding critical use of digital resources, and improving institutional supports (labs, study groups, workshops) to foster lifelong learning.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Islamic Higher Education, Listening Skills, Motivation, Self-Directed Learning (SDL)

INTRODUCTION

In higher education, mastering English as a foreign language (EFL) is an essential requirement. English plays a key role as a global language and is widely taught in Indonesian universities (Zein et al., 2020). University students are expected to develop proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Liu & Hu, 2021). Among these, listening skills, particularly listening comprehension, are often considered among the most challenging to acquire, particularly due to limited classroom exposure and lack of authentic listening practice. These obstacles contribute to students' lack of confidence in listening comprehension, which further hinders their ability to engage in academic discussions and real-life communication.

To address these challenges, modern educational approaches emphasize independent learning skills that extend beyond the classroom. Self-Directed Learning (SDL) has gained increasing attention as an effective method to foster this autonomy. According to Knowles (1975), SDL is a learning process in which individuals take initiative to diagnose their learning needs, set goals, identify resources, choose learning strategies, and evaluate outcomes. In the context of EFL listening, SDL encourages students to seek diverse and authentic learning resources, such as podcasts, online videos, and audiobooks. Studies have shown that SDL enhances students' metacognitive awareness, fosters a sense of ownership in learning, and allows them to adapt their learning based on personal preferences (O'Shea, 2003; Khodary, 2017).

However, despite its advantages, the implementation of SDL in listening skills development poses several challenges. Many students lack both the motivation and the awareness to take control of their learning and instead remain overly dependent on classroom instruction. Additionally, students often struggle with selecting effective learning strategies and

identifying suitable resources (Ramadhanty et al., 2023). Observations in academic settings indicate that many students perceive SDL as overwhelming due to the lack of structured guidance. This often results in inconsistent learning routines and ineffective practice. Without proper direction, students may fail to maximize SDL's potential, leading to minimal progress in their listening proficiency.

Preliminary classroom observations for this study revealed that many students struggled with understanding spoken English due to limited exposure in daily life. In class, listening activities were mostly teacher-centered, giving students little chance to practice independently. Outside the classroom, they rarely practiced listening on their own, as they were unsure which resources to use. Due to the limited use of English in their social environments, students became heavily reliant on classroom instruction. As a result, their motivation to improve listening skills independently decreased, affecting their ability to develop listening comprehension as a core component of listening skills.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the positive impact of SDL on the development of listening skills. Vu and Shah (2016) found that Vietnamese students who engaged in SDL practices demonstrated greater confidence in listening comprehension than their peers who relied solely on classroom instruction. Similarly, Nerta et al. (2024) observed that students who participated in self-selected listening activities, such as YouTube-based language learning, exhibited significant improvements. However, while these studies highlight the effectiveness of SDL, they also indicate the need for further research on how students navigate SDL in listening development and what factors influence its success.

Although motivation is inherently embedded in Self-Directed Learning (SDL), this study deliberately distinguishes between students' engagement in SDL and the motivational factors influencing their independent learning practices. This distinction is made to clearly identify the strategies students apply in their learning processes and the underlying reasons that drive their autonomy. This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how SDL contributes to the development of English listening skills within an EFL context.

Given these considerations, this study aims to explore how EFL university students engage in Self-Directed Learning (SDL) to improve their listening skills. It also examines the challenges they encounter and the factors that contribute to SDL's effectiveness. By analyzing students' strategies, difficulties, and learning experiences, this research seeks to provide valuable insights into optimizing SDL for listening skills enhancement in EFL higher education.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore students' experiences in Self-Directed Learning (SDL) for English listening skills within an EFL higher education context. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for a deep understanding of students' personal experiences, strategies, and challenges in regulating their learning processes, while a descriptive design provided a detailed account of how students developed SDL strategies and perceived their progress. The research was conducted at IAIN Bone, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, specifically in the English Education Program within the Faculty of Education. Seven students from the sixth and eighth semesters were selected through purposive sampling, as they were expected to have sufficient exposure to English listening activities and to demonstrate a certain level of autonomy in learning. This sampling ensured that the participants could provide rich insights into how SDL supported their listening skill development in an EFL context.

To collect data, semi-structured interviews were employed as the primary research instrument. This method was chosen because it offered both structure and flexibility, allowing

the researcher to address predetermined themes while also probing deeper into participants' unique experiences. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and online depending on participants' availability, audio-recorded, and transcribed verbatim to maintain accuracy. The validity of findings was ensured through member checking, where participants confirmed the accuracy of the transcriptions, while dependability was supported through an audit trail that documented interview guides, transcripts, coding, and verification processes. Data were analyzed using Miles et al.'s (2014) qualitative analysis framework, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. This systematic procedure enabled the study to authentically represent students' SDL experiences and generate meaningful insights into the factors influencing their listening skill development.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

1. Students' Engagement in Self-Directed Learning (SDL) for Improving English Listening Skills

a. *Goal Setting in Independent Listening*

The findings reveal that goal setting plays a central role in students' engagement with self-directed learning (SDL) for listening skills, although the nature and specificity of these goals vary across individuals. A majority of participants emphasized academic and professional objectives, most notably in preparation for standardized tests such as TOEFL and IELTS. For instance, Student A explicitly stated:

"Target saya adalah meningkatkan skor TOEFL saya. Karena saya pernah ikut pelatihan TOEFL dan saya sangat kurang di listening"

(My target is to improve my TOEFL score. Because I once joined a TOEFL training and I was very weak in listening).

This shows how weaknesses identified through formal testing encourage students to establish clear and measurable goals in independent study.

Student B expressed a broader vision of goal setting, aiming not only for exam results but also for access to global knowledge:

"Saya sangat-sangat ingin bisa lancar mendengarkan dengan tujuan utama saya dapat mengakses berbagai macam informasi global seperti jurnal ataupun podcast"

(I really want to be fluent in listening with the main goal of being able to access various kinds of global information such as journals or podcasts.)

Overall, the findings indicate that students' goals in independent listening are diverse, ranging from academic achievement and professional preparation to personal and social needs. These goals serve as important drivers that shape how students engage with SDL for improving their listening skills.

b. *Selection of Learning Materials in Independent Listening*

The findings demonstrate that the selection of learning materials is a highly individualized process in self-directed listening practices, with participants showing diverse preferences depending on their learning styles, accessibility of resources, and personal motivations. Although digital platforms dominate particularly YouTube, TikTok, and music streaming services students apply different criteria in selecting what works best for them.

For some students, material selection was guided by learning styles. Student C, for example, relied on karaoke-style music with textual support:

“Saya memilih musik model karaoke... ada textnya, jadi saya bisa mendengarkan sekaligus membaca dengan jelas.”

(I usually choose karaoke-style music... it has text so I can listen while reading clearly.)

This shows how learners combine listening and reading simultaneously to reinforce comprehension.

Another student, D, preferred to begin with short and simple materials before moving to longer and more complex ones:

“Saya biasa memilihnya yang short listening... setelah itu pindah ke long listening. Saya mempelajari trik-triknya dulu sebelum belajar di rumah.”

(I usually start with short listening... then move to long listening. I learn the tricks first before practicing at home.)

Students selected listening materials according to their needs and preferences. YouTube was the most widely used platform because of its varied content, TikTok was valued for short and engaging clips, while podcasts and language exchange apps were chosen for more authentic or advanced practice. The diversity of responses shows that learners intentionally adapt resources to support their independent listening development.

c. Independent Learning Strategies in Listening

The findings show that students applied a variety of strategies to manage their independent listening practices. While some relied on structured and repetitive routines, others preferred casual or flexible approaches that suited their personal interests and availability.

One of the clearest examples of deliberate strategy use came from Student A, who described a routine based on daily repetition:

“Strateginya itu repetition... setiap malam sebelum tidur saya review 1 sampai 3 video pendek.”

(My strategy is repetition... every night before bed I review 1 to 3 short videos.)

This shows how repetition can be integrated into daily routines as a way of strengthening listening skills.

Student E also mentioned repetition, particularly through songs:

“Kalau lagu itu pengulangan saja. Wah sering, paling sering itu diulang-ulang saja terus.”

(With songs, it's just repetition. I listen and repeat them again and again.)

Overall, the findings indicate that students' independent listening strategies commonly involved repetition, consistency, and casual exposure to media such as songs, podcasts, or short videos. The variation shows that strategies are highly personal, depending on learners' motivation, preferences, and level of commitment.

d. Self-Evaluation in Independent Listening

The findings reveal that self-evaluation played an important role in students' independent listening, allowing them to monitor their progress, recognize weaknesses, and make adjustments. Participants described different ways of evaluating themselves, ranging from formal tests to informal self-checks.

Some students relied on practice tests to measure their progress. Student B, for example, consistently used TOEFL prediction tests:

“Awal-awal saya mencoba tes TOEFL prediction itu skor saya hanya 30 sekian... terakhir saya tes itu menjadi 57, berarti of course itu meningkat.”

(At first, my TOEFL prediction score was only in the 30s... later it increased to 57, which means it improved.)

This shows how scores provided clear benchmarks and evidence of improvement.

Other students applied informal techniques. Student F explained how he used music for self-checking:

“Kalau saya mendengarkan musik, saya itu tidak melihat liriknya dulu... setelah itu saya coba dengan melihat lirik, apakah yang saya dengar sesuai atau tidak.”

(When listening to music, I first avoid looking at the lyrics... then I check whether what I heard matches the lyrics.)

The findings indicate that students used both formal methods (tests, exercises, scores) and informal practices (music, repetition, singing) to evaluate their listening progress. The variation shows that self-evaluation in independent listening is highly personal, combining measurable results with enjoyable activities to sustain motivation and monitor improvement.

e. Challenges in Self-Directed Listening

The data reveal that students faced various challenges in carrying out self-directed listening. Most difficulties came from internal factors such as motivation, focus, and self-discipline, while some also experienced external barriers such as limited time and unsupportive environments.

A common issue was lack of motivation and boredom. Student A admitted that she easily lost interest:

“Kalau mendengarkan listening selama 2 menit saja saya ngantuk... saya cepat bosan.”

(If I listen for just two minutes, I get sleepy... I get bored easily.)

This indicates that sustaining attention during independent study can be difficult.

Similarly, Student G mentioned challenges in maintaining concentration:

“Tantangannya tuh fokus saya sendiri yang susah untuk diatur.”

(The challenge is my own focus, which is hard to control.)

Taken together, these results indicate that students' challenges in self-directed listening involved both internal factors (motivation, focus, laziness, boredom) and external factors (time constraints, noisy environments). Internal challenges were more frequently mentioned and appeared to have a stronger impact, showing how self-regulation is both essential and difficult in independent listening.

f. The Role of Technology in Self-Directed Listening

The findings show that technology played a central role in students' independent listening practices. Digital platforms such as YouTube, Spotify, TikTok, and podcasts were frequently mentioned as essential tools, though the way they were used varied depending on goals and preferences.

Several students emphasized YouTube because of its accessibility and range of content. For example, Student A explained:

“YouTube... terutama channel TED Talk, sangat berperan penting bagi listening saya karena ada subtitle bahasa Inggris. Jadi saya bisa mendengarkan sekaligus melihat bagaimana kata diucapkan.”

(YouTube... especially the TED Talk channel, is very important for my listening because it has English subtitles. I can listen and at the same time see how words are pronounced.)

This highlights how features such as subtitles help learners combine auditory and visual support to enhance listening comprehension.

Student E also identified YouTube and Spotify as his main platforms:

“Yang paling berperan itu platform YouTube dan Spotify untuk meningkatkan listening.”

(The most useful platforms are YouTube and Spotify to improve listening.)

Collectively, the findings show that technology supported students' SDL listening in multiple ways: as a structured learning tool (e.g., TED Talks, test practice videos), as authentic input (e.g., podcasts), as casual or incidental practice (e.g., music during leisure), and as entertainment repurposed into learning (e.g., TikTok or YouTube clips). The variety of uses demonstrates how digital platforms provide both flexibility and accessibility, making them an integral part of independent listening.

g. Changes in Learning Habits through SDL Listening

The findings show that engaging in self-directed listening led to noticeable changes in students' study habits, although the extent of change varied depending on their motivation, consistency, and level of commitment. Most participants reported positive transformations such as greater classroom participation, improved focus, and more frequent exposure to English, while a few admitted that the changes were minimal.

Student D described how SDL made her more confident in classroom activities:

“Perubahannya banyak... saya menjadi lebih aktif di kelas dan tidak lagi asing dengan listening yang diberikan dosen.”

(There were many changes... I became more active in class and was no longer unfamiliar with listening tasks given by my lecturer.)

This suggests that independent practice outside class supported engagement in formal learning contexts.

Student A highlighted how SDL reshaped her daily routines, turning casual social media use into learning opportunities:

“Awalnya saya sering scroll TikTok dan langsung skip videonya... sekarang saya bisa mendengarkan minimal tiga video dalam sekali scroll setiap hari. Itu menunjukkan perkembangan positif.”

(At first, I used to scroll TikTok and skip videos... now I can listen to at least three videos in one scroll daily. It shows positive development.)

2. Factors Influencing Students' Motivation in Developing English Listening Skills Independently

a. Personal Interest in Independent Listening

Several students reported genuine enjoyment because SDL gave them autonomy and a sense of progress. Student D highlighted how independent practice made her feel more confident:

“Saya menikmati belajar di rumah... saya puas karena saya tahu apa yang harus saya tingkatkan. Itu membuat saya lebih aktif dan termotivasi di kelas.”

(I enjoy studying at home... I feel satisfied because I know what I need to improve. That makes me more active and motivated in class.)

Yet in another reflection, she admitted that her enjoyment was not always consistent:

“Masalah menikmati sih 50-50... kadang saya menikmati, tapi kadang juga bosan kalau belajar sendiri.”

(Enjoying it is fifty-fifty... sometimes I enjoy it, but sometimes I feel bored when learning alone.)

In summary, the findings suggest that personal interest played an important role in SDL listening. Students who enjoyed the process often linked it to autonomy, comfort, or engaging materials, while those who felt bored or preferred interactive settings experienced less enjoyment. This variation shows that intrinsic motivation in SDL is not uniform but depends on individual preferences and learning conditions.

b. External Targets in Independent Listening

The findings show that extrinsic motivation, especially academic and career-related goals, played a strong role in shaping students' self-directed listening. Many participants linked their practice to requirements such as TOEFL/IELTS preparation, exam performance, and career opportunities.

Several students emphasized standardized test preparation. Student C explained how test goals motivated his study:

“Saya menggunakan tujuan tertentu dalam belajar listening terutama misalnya dalam pembelajaran TOEFL... saya menerapkannya untuk dijadikan motivasi belajar.”

(I use certain goals in learning listening, especially for TOEFL... I apply them as motivation to study.)

Similarly, Student B described TOEFL preparation as important for both further education and career readiness:

“Mungkin... lebih ke TOEFL untuk persiapan lanjut pendidikan dan juga untuk karir ke depannya.”

(Maybe... more toward TOEFL for preparation to continue my study and for future career development.)

In summary, the findings indicate that external targets strongly shaped students' SDL listening. These included short-term academic needs such as classroom performance, as well as long-term aspirations like TOEFL/IELTS success and career opportunities. Extrinsic goals provided direction and urgency, keeping students engaged even when personal enjoyment was inconsistent.

c. Lecturer Support in Independent Listening

Several students described how lecturers gave explicit encouragement. Student A explained that her lecturer not only motivated her but also provided practical help:

“Dosen saya memberi motivasi bahkan menyediakan aplikasi untuk membantu listening, karena beliau tahu saya mudah bosan.”

(My lecturer gave me motivation and even provided an application to help with listening, because he knew I get bored easily.)

This shows how personalized support helped students overcome challenges like boredom.

Student D also emphasized the motivational impact of her lecturer, particularly in connecting listening with career relevance:

“Dosen saya mengatakan listening itu sangat penting untuk karir, jadi itu memotivasi saya untuk meningkatkan kemampuan.”

(My lecturer said listening is a very important skill for career, so that motivated me to improve.)

d. The Influence of Learning Environment in Independent Listening

For some, the campus environment provided strong encouragement. Student C highlighted the role of peers and seniors:

“Di kampus, teman-teman dan senior sering memotivasi dan melatih skill listening, dan itu sangat memengaruhi pembelajaran saya.”

(At campus, my friends and seniors often motivate and train listening skills, and that really influences my learning.)

This shows how collaboration and peer culture at campus supported SDL. Student F also described receiving support from both campus and home:

“Di kampus, teman-teman mendorong saya untuk lebih baik dalam bahasa Inggris... di rumah, keluarga saya sekarang lebih mendukung dibanding sebelumnya.”

(At campus, my friends encourage me to be better in English... at home, my family is now more supportive compared to before.)

e. Peer Influence in Independent Listening

Several students reported that peers motivated them to practice listening. Student C highlighted the encouragement he received:

“Teman-teman biasanya memotivasi dan mendukung saya untuk belajar listening secara mandiri.”

(My friends usually motivate and support me to learn listening on my own.)

This indicates that supportive peer groups strengthened commitment to SDL.

Student F described how interacting with friends who spoke English gave him more natural practice:

“Beberapa teman saya sering speaking bahasa Inggris... jadi saya bisa melatih listening aktif secara langsung, bukan hanya lewat platform.”

(Some of my friends often speak in English... so I can practice listening actively face-to-face, not only through platforms.)

f. The Role of Feedback in Independent Listening

Several students highlighted the corrective role of feedback. Student A explained:

“Meskipun belajar mandiri, kita tetap butuh kritik atau saran dari orang lain... kalau hanya mengandalkan diri sendiri, kita bisa saja merasa sudah benar.”

(Even though we learn independently, we still need criticism or suggestions from others... if we only rely on ourselves, we might think we are already correct.)

This shows that external correction prevents learners from becoming overconfident or repeating mistakes.

Similarly, Student G stated:

“Masukan itu penting... kita tidak bisa selalu mengandalkan diri sendiri, kita butuh orang lain supaya bisa lebih meningkatkan diri.”

(Feedback is important... we can't always rely on ourselves, we need others to help us improve.)

g. Perseverance in Independent Listening

Some students highlighted personal determination and competitiveness. Student A explained:

“Motivasi saya adalah diri saya sendiri... saya sangat kompetitif. Kalau ada orang yang lebih baik dari saya, saya akan mendorong diri saya untuk setara atau melampaui mereka.”

(My motivation is myself... I am very competitive. If someone is better than me, I push myself to reach or even surpass their level.)

This shows how intrinsic competitiveness can drive perseverance in SDL listening.

Student B described relying on meaningful goals and family support:

“Saya meyakinkan diri saya bahwa tujuan saya itu penting... orang tua juga memotivasi saya, dan untuk diri saya sendiri, saya ingin meningkatkan kualitas.”

(I convince myself that my goals are very important... my parents also motivate me, and for myself, I want to improve my quality.)

h. Future Expectations in Independent Listening

Several students emphasized academic and certification goals. Student D, for example, hoped to master advanced listening skills for international exams:

“Harapan saya listening saya sudah bagus... termasuk British listening, supaya saya bisa berada di tingkat expert.”

(My hope is that my listening will already be good... including British listening, so that I can be at an expert level.)

Similarly, Student B expressed her ambition to move from B2 to C1:

“Terakhir TOEFL prediction saya 57, setara B2... harapan saya terus meningkat bahkan sampai C1.”

(Last time my TOEFL prediction score was 57, equivalent to B2... my hope is to keep improving, even reaching C1.)

Discussion

1. Students' Engagement in Self-Directed Learning (SDL) for Improving English Listening Skills

a. Goal Setting and Learner Autonomy

The findings indicate that students established diverse goals in their self-directed listening (SDL) practices, ranging from academic targets such as higher TOEFL scores to personal aims like improving confidence in oral communication. This shows that goal setting in SDL is not only a performance measure but also a motivational driver shaping learners' engagement. These results align with Grow's Staged Self-Directed Learning (1991, 1994) and Deci & Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (2000), both of which emphasize autonomy, competence, and ownership of the learning process as key to enhancing intrinsic motivation. Previous studies in Indonesia (Hidayati et al., 2022; Pancarwati, 2021) similarly demonstrated that learners often set both specific and affective goals, with awareness of goal setting helping them focus and mentally prepare for listening tasks.

Beyond these frameworks, goal orientation theory highlights that mastery-oriented goals, such as developing confidence and deeper comprehension, foster sustained motivation, while performance orientation can cause stress when outcomes are unmet. In the Indonesian EFL context, this study contributes by showing that despite exam pressures,

students also value affective and personal goals often overlooked in local research. Practically, educators should encourage dual goals academic and personal while policy makers should design SDL training modules including goal formulation, reflection, and self-evaluation. In conclusion, goal setting is not merely instrumental but constitutes a core component of SDL that integrates academic, affective, and identity-related dimensions, thereby equipping learners with lifelong skills for academic and professional success.

b. Material Selection and Strategic Flexibility

The findings show that students exercised strong independence in selecting materials for their self-directed listening (SDL), ranging from music, films, YouTube, podcasts, and TikTok to more formal resources like TOEFL modules and online lectures. This diversity reflects their effort to balance enjoyment with practicality while aligning resources to personal goals, such as note-taking practice, vocabulary building, or accent recognition. Such autonomy corresponds with Knowles' (1975) and Song & Hill's (2007) views that self-directed learners critically choose strategies and tools to sustain motivation and persistence. Previous studies (Miranty, 2023; Aprianto, 2024; Meldayana et al., 2025; Polat & Erişti, 2019) also confirmed the effectiveness of podcasts, YouTube, and authentic audiovisual materials in enhancing listening comprehension and reducing anxiety. What distinguishes this study is the evidence of students' strategic flexibility, as they combined both entertainment-oriented and exam-focused materials for purposeful learning.

This flexibility aligns with Garrison's (1997) SDL model and Hatano & Inagaki's (1986) concept of adaptive expertise, emphasizing the interplay of self-management, monitoring, and strategy adjustment. Students treated material selection as a dynamic process of experimentation and reflection, integrating social media and digital platforms as legitimate learning spaces. This contributes to the Indonesian EFL context by showing learners' ability to creatively adapt everyday digital tools for SDL. Practically, it suggests educators should guide students in curating diverse resources, balancing academic rigor with authentic input. Theoretically, the findings extend Knowles' and Garrison's models by underscoring not just autonomy but adaptability as key to SDL effectiveness, while at the policy level, universities should embed training in digital literacy and resource evaluation to strengthen lifelong learning skills.

c. Learning Strategies and Self-Regulation

The findings show that students employed a variety of strategies in their self-directed listening practices, such as repetition, note-taking, transcript checking, pausing and replaying audio, and shadowing. These strategies were not used uniformly but combined flexibly depending on task difficulty and personal goals, reflecting both strategic awareness and self-regulation. This aligns with Zimmerman's (2002) model of self-regulated learning and Oxford's (2011) framework of language learning strategies, indicating that learners actively engaged in planning, monitoring, and evaluating their progress. Compared to previous studies in Indonesia and abroad, the present research emphasizes that learners did not rely on single techniques but strategically integrated multiple approaches, demonstrating higher levels of adaptability and metacognitive regulation.

This flexibility also supports Pintrich's (2004) view of self-regulation as a dynamic process and resonates with Garrison's (1997) SDL model that highlights self-management and self-monitoring. The findings contribute by showing how Indonesian EFL learners combine traditional and digital strategies to overcome comprehension challenges and sustain motivation. Practically, this suggests that teachers should encourage strategy awareness and provide opportunities for guided reflection, while theoretically, it extends

existing frameworks by highlighting SDL practices in blended digital contexts. Overall, students' strategic use of multiple approaches illustrates how self-regulation empowers them to persist in independent listening and balance autonomy with academic demands.

d. Challenges and Barriers

The findings revealed that students faced various challenges in their self-directed listening (SDL) practices, including limited vocabulary, difficulty with fast speech, environmental distractions, and unstable internet connections. These barriers often led to frustration and demotivation, especially during intensive TOEFL/IELTS preparation. Such challenges align with Deci and Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes that unmet psychological needs reduce motivation, and Garrison's (1997) SDL model, which highlights the role of self-management and monitoring both of which can be disrupted by technological or contextual obstacles. Prior studies in EFL contexts, such as Hamouda (2013), Wahyuningsih and Salsabila (2023), and Izzah and Keeya (2019), reported similar difficulties, underscoring that SDL barriers are not only linguistic but also psychological and technological in nature.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings resonate with Pintrich's (2004) view of self-regulation as involving cognitive, emotional, and contextual control, and O'Shea's (2003) emphasis on resilience in SDL. The persistence of students despite these barriers reflects adaptability that is essential for long-term success. Practically, the study highlights the need for educators and institutions to provide support through coping strategies, digital literacy training, and infrastructural resources such as quiet study spaces and reliable internet. Overall, the findings extend Garrison's SDL framework by stressing the role of contextual and affective challenges, showing that barriers are inherent to SDL and should be addressed as part of the learning process rather than seen as learner weaknesses.

e. Role of Technology

The findings show that technology plays a central role in students' self-directed listening (SDL) practices, with learners frequently using platforms such as YouTube, Spotify, TikTok, and online TOEFL/IELTS preparation resources. Technology enabled students to access authentic materials, practice flexibly, and diversify exposure to different accents and contexts. At the same time, it also posed challenges, including distraction from entertainment content and dependence on internet connectivity. This dual function highlights that technology in SDL listening can act both as an enabler and a barrier, depending on how learners regulate their use. The results align with Garrison's (1997) SDL model and Deci & Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination Theory, showing how technology enhances autonomy, competence, and relatedness while requiring strong self-regulation.

Previous studies further confirm the transformative role of digital tools in SDL listening. Research by Rahimi and Katal (2012) and Nartiningrum & Nugroho (2020) demonstrated that mobile learning, YouTube, and podcasts empower learners with autonomy and motivation, while Benson (2013) emphasized that their effectiveness depends on digital literacy and critical awareness. The present study adds nuance by showing how Indonesian students integrate both exam-oriented and everyday technologies like TikTok into their learning, recognizing both benefits and distractions. Theoretically, this underscores the need to reconceptualize learner autonomy in the digital age as including self-regulation and digital competence. Practically, it suggests that educators should guide students in purposeful use of digital resources, integrating training in digital literacy and blended approaches that combine academic and authentic materials.

2. Factors Influencing Students' Motivation in Developing English Listening Skills Independently

a. Motivational Factors

The findings show that students' motivation in self-directed listening (SDL) is shaped by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsically, learners were driven by personal growth, enjoyment, and confidence in communication, while extrinsically, they were influenced by academic requirements such as TOEFL/IELTS preparation, classroom performance, and career aspirations. This dual influence reflects Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (2000), which distinguishes between intrinsic satisfaction and external regulation, as well as Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (2009), where students' visions of themselves as proficient English users act as motivational drivers. The results indicate that SDL listening motivation is dynamic, integrating self-fulfillment with external pressures to shape persistence and engagement.

Previous research supports this complexity, showing that EFL learners balance personal enjoyment with external expectations. For instance, Lamb (2012) found Indonesian learners motivated by both global aspirations and local demands, while Trang and Baldauf (2007) observed Vietnamese students struggling when extrinsic pressures outweighed intrinsic interest. These findings resonate with the present study, where Indonesian students combined exam-driven goals with personal concerns such as reducing insecurity in conversations. Theoretically, this extends SDT by showing how extrinsic demands can be internalized into meaningful goals, sustaining long-term SDL listening. Practically, educators should provide resources that meet both academic requirements and personal interests, while institutions should create autonomy-supportive environments that encourage learners to balance exam preparation with enjoyable listening activities, fostering sustainable and lifelong motivation.

b. Feedback and Perseverance

The findings indicate that feedback whether from teachers, peers, or self-assessment plays a crucial role in sustaining students' motivation and perseverance in self-directed listening (SDL). External encouragement, such as corrections or supportive comments from lecturers, helped learners recognize weaknesses and build confidence, while self-generated feedback, like checking transcripts or tracking progress in TOEFL/IELTS practice tests, reinforced persistence. This dual reliance on external input and self-monitoring aligns with Zimmerman's (2002) self-regulated learning cycle and Hattie & Timperley's (2007) framework, both of which emphasize feedback as essential for motivation, adjustment, and resilience in the face of listening difficulties.

Previous studies (e.g., Carless & Boud, 2018; Shute, 2008) similarly highlight feedback as more than correction, framing it as a literacy that enables learners to act on information, reduce uncertainty, and sustain engagement. The present study contributes by showing how Indonesian EFL learners integrate teacher input, peer encouragement, and self-assessment into feedback loops that balance external validation with self-regulation. Theoretically, this extends motivational and self-regulation frameworks (Dörnyei, 2001; Ryan & Deci, 2017), demonstrating that perseverance is not a fixed trait but a dynamic outcome of effective feedback processes. Practically, it suggests that SDL listening programs should embed structured feedback mechanisms and reflection activities to help students persist over time.

c. Future Expectations and Lifelong Learning

The findings indicate that students' motivation for self-directed listening (SDL) was strongly shaped by future expectations, such as achieving high TOEFL/IELTS scores for postgraduate studies or becoming confident communicators in professional and social contexts. These aspirations reflect Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System, where the Ideal L2 Self functions as a powerful driver of engagement, and align with Knowles' (1975) view of adult learning as future-oriented. Previous research in EFL contexts, including Lamb (2017), Magid & Chan (2012), and Taguchi et al. (2009), consistently confirms that learners' visions of their future selves sustain persistence in language learning. Compared with these studies, the present research shows that Indonesian students integrate both academic certification goals and affective aspirations into their SDL listening, highlighting the diverse and multidimensional nature of future-oriented motivation.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings resonate with Ushioda's (2009) relational view of motivation, which emphasizes that learners' future aspirations are grounded in their social and institutional contexts. Students in this study frequently connected SDL listening with broader life projects, such as achieving global competitiveness or fulfilling graduation requirements, showing how long-term goals serve as motivational anchors that foster perseverance and self-regulation (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2014). Practically, this suggests that English programs should integrate reflective practices like goal-setting journals or career-oriented listening tasks to connect classroom learning with lifelong aspirations. Theoretically, the study extends the L2 Motivational Self System by illustrating how Indonesian learners combine academic, professional, and affective goals in shaping their SDL listening, positioning future expectations as a core driver of motivation and lifelong learning.

CONCLUSION

Students at the Islamic university engage in self-directed learning (SDL) for English listening through diverse, goal-oriented strategies that reflect both academic ambition and personal growth. These include goals such as TOEFL/IELTS preparation and increased self-confidence in communication. Learners select a range of accessible, authentic materials like YouTube, music, podcasts, and TikTok, and apply flexible strategies such as repetition, shadowing, note-taking, and self-assessment through practice tests. Technology plays a central role as both a tool and a substitute for classroom input, although learners must navigate challenges like distraction, boredom, inconsistent routines, and unsupportive environments. Their persistence illustrates that SDL listening is a multidimensional process requiring autonomy, motivation, and self-discipline.

Students' motivation to sustain SDL listening is shaped by a dynamic combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic motivators include enjoyment, self-improvement, and curiosity, while extrinsic ones involve academic targets, future careers, peer influence, and lecturer support. Feedback whether from teachers, peers, or self-assessment plays a crucial role in maintaining motivation and preventing stagnation. Learners demonstrate perseverance by internalizing challenges and holding on to future aspirations such as studying abroad, achieving high test scores, and becoming globally competent English users. These findings confirm that SDL listening is not merely a response to academic pressure, but a self-driven pathway toward long-term growth, global readiness, and lifelong learning.

REFERENCES

- Aprianto, D. (2024). EFL students' attitudes towards the use of podcasts as a language learning medium to increase learning interest. *SALEE: Study of Applied Linguistics and English Education*, 5(1), 44–60. <https://doi.org/10.35961/salee.v5i1.1218>
- Benson, P. (2001). *Teaching and Researching Autonomy in Language Learning*. Harlow, England: Pearson Education.
- Carless, D., & Boud, D. (2018). The development of student feedback literacy: enabling uptake of feedback. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 43(8), 1315–1325. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2018.1463354>
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The “What” and “Why” of Goal Pursuits: Human Needs and the Self-Determination of Behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227–268. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01
- Dörnyei, Z. (2001). *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667343>
- Dörnyei, Z., & Ushioda, E. (Eds.). (2009). *Motivation, Language Identity and the L2 Self*. Bristol, England: Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847691293>
- Garrison, D. R. (1997). Self-directed learning: Toward a comprehensive model. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 48(1), 18–33. <https://doi.org/10.1177/074171369704800103>
- Grow, G. O. (1991). Teaching learners to be self-directed. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 41(3), 125–149. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0001848191041003001>
- Grow, G. O. (1994). In defense of the staged self-directed learning model. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 44(2), 109–114. <https://doi.org/10.1177/074171369404400206>
- Hamouda, A. (2013). An investigation of listening comprehension problems encountered by Saudi students in the EL listening classroom. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 2(2), 113–155.
- Hatano, G., & Inagaki, K. (1986). Two courses of expertise. In H. Stevenson, H. Azuma, & K. Hakuta (Eds.), *Child development and education in Japan* (pp. 262–272). New York, NY: Freeman.
- Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 81–112. <https://doi.org/10.3102/003465430298487>
- Hidayati, A. N., Hadijah, S., Masyhur, G., & Nurhaedin, E. (2022). Unveiling an Indonesian EFL student's self-directed listening learning: A narrative inquiry. In *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Language, Literature, Education and Culture (ICOLLEC 2021)*. EAI. <https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.9-10-2021.2319469>
- Izzah, L., & Keeya, K. (2019). Common listening challenges: Indonesian EFL learners' perception. *English Language in Focus*, 1(2), 95–106. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.21077.37603>
- Khodary, M. M. (2017). Edmodo use to develop Saudi EFL students' self-directed learning. *English Language Teaching*, 10(2), 123–135. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v10n2p123>
- Knowles, M. S. (1975). *Self-Directed Learning: A Guide for Learners and Teachers*. New York, NY: Association Press.
- Lamb, M. (2012). A self system perspective on young adolescents' motivation to learn English in urban and rural settings. *Language Learning*, 62(4), 997–1023. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2012.00719.x>
- Lamb, M. (2017). The motivational dimension of language teaching. *Language Teaching*, 50(3), 301–346. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444817000088>
- Liu, Y., & Hu, G. (2021). Mapping the field of English for specific purposes (1980–2018): A co-citation analysis. *English for Specific Purposes*, 61, 97–116. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2020.10.003>

- Magid, M., & Chan, L. (2012). Motivating English learners by helping them visualise their ideal L2 self: Lessons from two motivational programmes. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 6(2), 113–125. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2011.614693>
- Meldayana, S. R., Maulina, M., & Nasrullah, R. (2025). EFL students' perceptions towards YouTube as a language learning resource to improve listening skills: Out of the class context. *Klasikal: Journal of Education, Language Teaching and Science*, 7(1), 436–454. <https://doi.org/10.52208/klasikal.v7i1.1278>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Miranty, D. (2023). Factors influencing Indonesian EFL students' decisions and time spent for utilizing podcasts in extensive listening classes. *Journal of English Language Studies*, 8(2), 374–393. <https://jurnal.untirta.ac.id/index.php/JELS/article/view/21535>
- Nartiningrum, N., & Nugroho, A. (2020). Online learning amidst global pandemic: EFL students' challenges, suggestions, and learning strategies. *English Education Journal*, 4(2), 115–140. <https://doi.org/10.29240/ef.v4i2.1494>
- Nerta, P. O., Tohamba, C. P. P., & Faridawati. (2024). EFL students' self-directed learning in using YouTube to improve listening skills. *Klasikal: Journal of Education, Language Teaching and Science*, 6(2), 432–447. <https://doi.org/10.52208/klasikal.v6i2.1171>
- O'Shea, E. (2003). Self-directed learning in nurse education: A review of the literature. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 43(1), 62–70. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2648.2003.02673.x>
- Oxford, R. L. (2011). *Teaching and Researching Language Learning Strategies*. London, England: Routledge.
- Pancarwati, M. A. (2021). The correlation between EFL learners' metacognitive awareness and listening comprehension. *RETAIN: Research on English Language Teaching in Indonesia*, 9(2), 152–160. <https://ejournal.unesa.ac.id/index.php/retain/article/view/39948>
- Pintrich, P. R. (2004). A conceptual framework for assessing motivation and self-regulated learning in college students. *Educational Psychology Review*, 16(4), 385–407. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-004-0006-x>
- Polat, M., & Erişti, B. (2019). The effects of authentic video materials on foreign language listening skill development and foreign language listening anxiety at different levels of English proficiency. *IJCER: International Journal of Contemporary Educational Research*, 6(1), 135–154. <https://doi.org/10.33200/ijcer.567863>
- Rahimi, M., & Katal, M. (2012). Metacognitive strategies awareness and success in learning English as a foreign language: An overview. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 31, 73–81. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.12.019>
- Ramadhanty, F., Dasuki, D., Mandalika, D., & Sumarni, S. (2023). *The effectiveness of self-directed learning for English language education: A systematic literature review*. In *Proceedings of the English Language & Literature International Conference (ELLIC)* (Vol. 6, No. 1). Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang. <https://jurnal.unimus.ac.id/index.php/ELLIC/index>
- Schunk, D. H., Meece, J. L., & Pintrich, P. R. (2014). *Motivation in Education: Theory, Research, and Applications* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Shute, V. J. (2008). Focus on formative feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 78(1), 153–189. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654307313795>
- Song, L., & Hill, J. R. (2007). A conceptual model for understanding self-directed learning in online environments. *Journal of Interactive Online Learning*, 6(1), 27–42.
- Taguchi, T., Magid, M., & Papi, M. (2009). The L2 motivational self system among Japanese, Chinese and Iranian learners of English: A comparative study. In Z. Dörnyei & E.

- Ushioda (Eds.), *Motivation, language identity and the L2 Self* (pp. 66–97). Bristol, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Trang, T. T. T., & Baldauf, R. B. (2007). Demotivation: Understanding resistance to English language learning - The case of Vietnamese students. *The Journal of Asia TEFL*, 4(1), 79–105.
- Vu, H. Y., & Shah, M. (2016). Vietnamese students' self-direction in learning English listening skills. *Asian Englishes*, 18(1), 53–66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13488678.2015.1136104>
- Wahyuningsih, S., & Salsabila, R. P. (2023). Barriers to English listening comprehension for Indonesian university students: Implications for listening curriculum development. *Jurnal PAJAR (Pendidikan dan Pengajaran)*, 7(5), 924–932. <https://doi.org/10.33578/pjr.v7i5.9498>
- Zein, S., Sukyadi, D., Hamied, F. A., & Lengkanawati, N. S. (2020). English language education in Indonesia: A review of research (2011–2019). *Language Teaching*, 53(4), 491–523. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444820000208>
- Zimmerman, B. J. (2002). Becoming a self-regulated learner: An overview. *Theory Into Practice*, 41(2), 64–70. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4102_2