

## EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF VIRTUAL LEARNING IN LISTENING CLASS: A CLASSROOM IMPLEMENTATION

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**Abstract:** This study aims to determine EFL students' perception of virtual learning in listening class. It specifically describes on how higher education students perceive about the implementation and challenges towards virtual learning in listening class. This research employs a qualitative case study design. It involves several facets as the participants in order to obtain valid and reliable data to answer the research problems. The participants were 90 students and 2 lecturers taken from two different universities. From those amount of students, it was 50 students selected to meet the criterion of virtual learning implementation and the students' responses profiling their perception of listening class. The findings about students' perception of listening class are analyzed through the internal and external factors. Internal factors include students' physical condition, opportunities and motivation as well as students' perceptions of the level of difficulty in listening. External factors consist of learning materials, lecturers and teaching methods and the use of learning media. In the level of implementation and challenges, students thought that virtual learning is appropriate media of teaching listening during pandemic if lecturers are able to carry out their roles and students are always response the challenge adaptively in both terms of content and technology.

**Keywords:** *English for Foreign Language (EFL); students' perceptions; virtual learning; listening class.*

### INTRODUCTION

Since the government policy about guidelines for learning from home to all levels of education launched as an effort to minimize the spread of the Covid-19 virus, learning in campus has shifted to home learning. Face to face learning moves to online learning. It requires a range of technologies such as worldwide web, email, new group and text, chat, audio and video conferencing through computer network to impart education (Jia & Hew, 2021)

It also implied to students, parents and the lecturers' readiness to improve digital literacy (Maqableh & Alia, 2021; Girvan & Savage, 2019).

The integration of technology in the world of education has essentially been done as part of learning innovation in the era of globalization. Yet, it's no longer as a challenge to innovate, but it becomes a necessity. Even though online learning system has been implemented for almost two years, problems dealt with lacks of teacher/lectures readiness of integrating technology in their class still exist (Pallof & Pratt, 2017; Weiss, Piancentine, Candela, & Bobay, 2021). The other problems also came from both students and their parents. The students are burdened with BDR assignments since they perceive that online learning means assignment from teachers; and from parents' points

of view, they feel tired of accompanying their children besides of thinking how to survive of their respective lives and jobs during the pandemic. Those factual conditions are best to be our reflection towards the implementation of online teaching process.

English subject becomes an important, yet difficult subject that the students especially in higher level needs to be mastered. Students are expected to be capable in four English skills, they are listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Teachers have long used the concept of four basic language skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing. The four language skills can be called macro skills. On the other hand, there are micro skills such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling. Those four basics skills related to each other. However, this study will focus more on listening skills.

Listening is one of the important and fundamental skills in learning English. It is a receptive skill which means that learners receive new words from what they hear. The ability to listen will affect the ability to produce sentences (Chang and Millet, 2016). Students at higher education levels who are good at listening; they will have good competence in productive skills, which are speaking and writing skills (Burns & Siegel, 2018). Djaborova (2020) adds that there is a significant difference between listening and just hearing. Hearing refers to the sound of words that your ears receive and it is a physical process that can occur as long as a person does not have a hearing problem. On the other hand, listening requires more than that, it requires more focus and effort, both mentally and physically. It means, listening skill is a skill that not only involves physical hearing but also understanding the words that are heard so that later a sentence can be produced, both spoken and written (Schmidt, 2016).

Teaching listening requires certain ways to help students especially in higher education levels to fully understand what they are listening to. Misbah, Gulikers, Maulana, & Mulder (2019) explains that an effective teacher presents how they can adapt students' listening behavior to face various situations. The teachers help students to develop a set of the right strategy or method for every listening situation. Krivosheyeva, Zuparova and Shodiyeva (2020) confirmed that it doesn't

matter what method a teacher uses to teach listening skills. Teachers can think of ways of teaching that will help teachers and students direct the learning process. Effective modern methods for teaching listening skills include starting from interactive exercises to multimedia resources (Maqableh & Alia, 2021). Listening skills can be learned well or improved through simple and engaging activities that focus on the learning process.

Teaching media commonly used to practice listening skills are generally in the form of transcript videotape, audiotape and various other supporting materials for activities that allow direct lecturer-student interaction in the classroom or language laboratory (Caroline, 2007). In face-to-face learning, lecturers have broad opportunities to ensure students' active participation starting from the pre, whilst to post listening stages through active participation and involvement; by giving deep questions and answer (Nusha & Orouji, 2020). Haynes (2010) indicates that the questions arise will promote students' participation and create specifics value-bound.

From the results of previous studies, it is said that 43% of students think that listening comprehension is the most difficult among the three other language skills (reading, writing and speaking) and some of them feel bored and less motivated in learning (Bourdeaud'hui, et.al: 2018; Burns & Siegel, 2018). These difficulties are also experienced by students in the listening class, including failure in recognizing which is caused by limited mastery of vocabularies as well as the speed of speech of native speakers who are too fast. Other research conducted by Wong, Leung, Tsui, Dealey, & Cheung (2021) showed that other factors also influence the students' listening skill. This is caused by several factors, such as learning media factors and less conducive learning environment. As a result, students are less able to understand the material presented by the lecturer. This fact is one of the considerations for lecturers to be able to carry their roles in designing, implementing and reflecting on methods, media as well as teaching materials.

Most of the researchs that have been done previously described the process of face to face teaching listening skills. However, since the pandemic occurred, the teaching and learning process has also undergone significant changes

(Gillespie, Boulton, Hramiak, & Williamson, 2007). Due to limited circumstances to be able to hold face-to-face learning, online learning is an option that can be done. Virtual classrooms become an alternative for lecturers to hold online listening class. It is learning activity based on e-learning; a place where virtual learning occurs. Some of the platforms used by lecturers, i.e. Zoom, Google meet, MS Teams. Some lecturers also used WhatsApp call to facilitate virtual classrooms. The targeted outcomes of teaching listening through virtual class would be: in the end of lesson, students will be able to listen effectively in limited time and circumstance. Its successful will depend on three pedagogical factors (Parisi, 2015).

The first pedagogical factors require students-centered learning and teachers' role as a facilitator and the integration of knowledge. Secondly, is dealing with flexible learning design based on students' needs, contextual and integrating suitable technology. the last factor is facilitation which includes clear expectations, appropriate questions, understanding and choice of cultural issues, giving timely feedback, constructive and detail, as well as high attitude and commitment (Carillo & Flores, 2020).

Meanwhile, that ideal condition sometimes cannot be obtained by the students since direct interaction can be done during Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, some challenges appear in listening class through virtual learning. Lecturers have to manage classroom atmosphere where each phases of listening process in which students' experience difficulties during the class are managed and guided well.

## METHOD

This research employs a qualitative case study design. Of all common types of qualitative research in education, the design to conduct is case study. Case study can be defined in terms of the process of actually carrying out the investigation, the unit of analysis (the bounded system, the case), or the end product (Cresswell, 2016). Other definition of a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates phenomena in real life, where the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly defined and where multiple sources of evidence can be utilized (Yin, 2013). Case studies in particular can be used in research in education. Sources as evidence referred to here can be in the

form of documents, audio, visual or audiovisual materials interviews, observations and equipments.

The focus of this study was classroom behavior as part of the phenomena or culture of a group of students in particular community in the context of teaching English in higher education. Thus, this type of case study research applied to this research is ethnographic evaluative case study (Glaser & Strauss, 2006). It is intended to investigate the students' perception of virtual learning in listening class. Specifically, it will describe the implementation and challenges faced by EFL students. In order to uncover the problem formulations, the data are collected through observations, interviews, and documents. Some evaluation is given to develop a better understanding of virtual learning implementation.

The research is precisely conducted in English education program from two different universities. It involves several facets as the participants in order to obtain valid and reliable data to answer the research problems. The participants were 90 students and 2 lecturers taken from both universities. From those amounts of students, it was 50 students selected to meet the criterion of virtual learning implementation and the students' responses and perception.

The primary qualitative data are taken from the observation and interview. Observations are conducted during the process of teaching and learning during pandemic. Interviews between the researcher, lecturers, and students from English education program. The interview carried out in a structured way involving the use of a set of predetermined questions and of highly standardized techniques of recording. Open questionnaire, as one of the documents to be analyzed considered as the heart of a survey operation. It was carefully constructed. It consists of 30 items which written and open ended. After data collected and analyzed, the triangulation-using multiple investigators, member-checks, and longer observation were done in order to increase the validity of the findings.

In relation to the ethical issue, the researcher has conducted the research in certain ways to appreciate the subject involving in the data collections; particularly interviews and observations. The researcher has adopted the following procedures to ensure the ethical standard of the research: (1) approval from research site has been obtained before further studies, (2) approval

from lectures and institutions, whose class is to be observed, have been available, (3) all students in the observed class are guaranteed privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality, and (4) the researcher, as advised by the academic section and teachers, has observed the class under complete participant observation to maintain students' convenience and naturalness of the flow of teaching and learning process in the classroom.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### *Students' perceptions of listening skills*

Regarding students' perception of listening skills, the researchers focused on external and internal factors that influenced students' responses to virtual learning of listening class. Internal factors that include students' physical condition, opportunities and motivation as well as students' perceptions of the level of difficulty in listening. External factors include learning materials, lecturers and teaching methods, as well as the use of learning media.

### *Students' physical conditions*

One of the determinant factors of students' success in listening is closely related to physical condition. When a student is healthy, not tired, listening will certainly be more effective. Related to this, from the total number of respondents, 19 students (38%) answered "always" and often (27 students or 54%) to the statement that they continued to take listening classes even though they were sick. In declined health condition, most of them (66%) admitted that they were not able to concentrate fully, so they could still they were not optimal in doing listening exercises. Only a small proportion of respondents answered that they could still concentrate when they were not fit. It can be concluded that they can't concentrate fully and

have difficulty to listen properly at the moment their physical condition is declining. However, students are still trying to concentrate as in virtual learning, considering their awareness of time limitation and their interest joining listening class. As said by one of students,

"I think we have to do it with high concentration because to do the exercise from this skill we have to adjust with time, and actually this course is really fun."

### *Motivation and interest*

As students of the English Education program, students realize that even though they thought listening is difficult (76% of respondents), they must be able to conquer material given by the lecturer. One of their reasons is that listening become most important skills in addition to the other skills. As student's explanation,

"I think it is the most important skill among the others because when we talk to native speakers, we have to know what they are talking about first, if we understand the meaning then we can answer it in many ways."

Another student revealed that listening skills are important considering that we will not able to understand what the speaker is saying (in English), as obtained from the interview,

"Listening skills is very important. Because, if we can't understand what the speaker say, we don't understand what the speaker meaning".

This awareness increases their interest and raises their motivation to explore material being listened in virtual learning (Parisi, 2015). This is evident from the following questionnaire data (figure 1); most of students choose answer sometimes for statement 3 about the level of difficulty of listening.

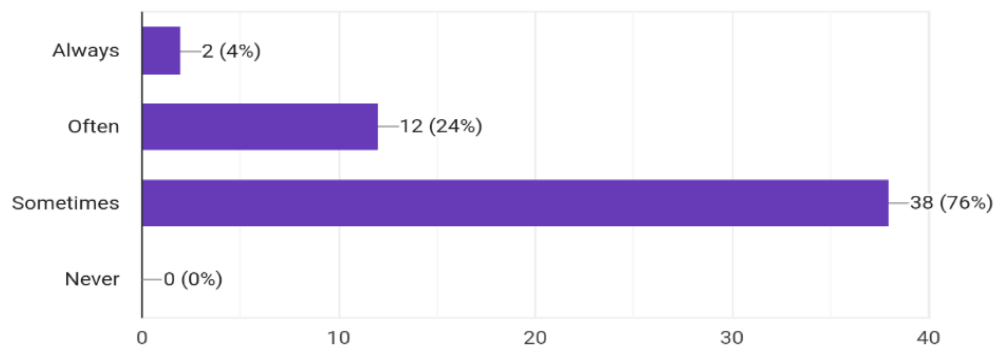


Figure 1. *Students responds of difficulties in listening*

### *Listening materials*

Dealing with listening material taught, students feel happy when lecturers provide learning materials with interesting topics accompanied by strategies to hold on problems related to the spoken text easily. As conveyed by student,

“Yes, because we are given the opportunity to listen to the audio first about an interesting topic to learn and the lecturer also gives some tricks that can help us solve the problem”.

In addition, it also said that students were happy with the way lecture gave listening task, especially during virtual class. As another student explained in the interview,

“I am quite happy with the way the lecturer teaches by giving assignments and holding virtual meetings”

### *Lectures, methods and teaching media*

From the result of interview, it can be concluded that most students feel motivated in virtual listening class because the lecture plays the role very well, as a facilitator, lecturer provide materials clearly and easily to be understood, as said by student, “Yes, I am. The lecturer's explanation is easier to understand”. This also supported by the explanations of other students who prove that the role of facilitator is well carried out by lecturers, it's seen from the presentation of material and the ability to share tricks on doing listening tasks,

“Yes, I am. Because the way she teaches is very clear and she also explain and share tips to how to answer the question easily.”

Furthermore, lecturers are also able to carry out role as a motivator, this was explained by some students in the interview,

“Yes I'm happy, because I like listening to lectures.”

“Yes, the method. They give an interesting way to do and explain to the students.”

“Mrs. always says that listening is a skill that we can all benefit from improving. By becoming a better listener, you can improve your productivity, as well as your ability to influence, persuade and negotiate. What's more, you'll avoid conflict and misunderstandings. All of these are necessary for workplace success!”

Those explanations show that lecturers are able to facilitate students in virtual learning.

Carrying out the role as collaborator, the lecturers always allow students to be active in class, sharing and collaborating so that they do not feel afraid to ask many questions.

“Absolutely happy, cause the lecture can be "friend" during lecturing time and also in real life.”

“Yes of course, I am happy cause students are given more chance to deliver their ideas or preferences so lectures are able to see student's ability.”

Most of the students agreed that besides using Google meet, Zoom, or WhatsApp call, lectures often used MS Teams as teaching listening platforms for virtual meeting. Through Teams, students explain that teaching strategy applied by lecturers,

“In teams, lecturer will give us an audio for the next week. And in that time, we play the audio from the last week and try to do the task. Lecturer often give us trick and suggestion how to identify and understand the purpose of listening to the audio.”

### *Classroom implementations and challenges*

Results of in-depth interviews and observations, the media used by the lecturers in teaching listening is Virtual class (VC). This was confirmed by the students, as seen in questionnaire response which stated that virtual learning was applied to certain platforms; Microsoft teams (64%), Google meet (24%), and zoom 0,12%. Therefore, this study discusses virtual learning through MS teams.

In virtual learning through MS teams, there is interaction between students-students, students-the media, students-teachers, and also students with the contents. Due to the smooth interactions, course content is designed interactively, contextual and involving students to be active, in this case lecturer plays important roles to motivates the students in using the media verbal and non-verbally. The students are challenging to adapt with integration of technology and content. A student explains,

“I don't really feel comfortable with virtual class. The audio often not clear and make the class hard to understand. But the condition force us to do so. That's why students have to prepare the internet connection, material learned so that we can actively join the class.”

In contrast with face-to face learning, in virtual classes the lecturer has to control the interactions

and ensure that students understand material discussed. Involving students to participate as often as possible will prevent students from becoming bored and losing control of the material. The following are material illustrations, objectives and the application of teaching procedures that been applied by lecturers.

*Materials*

Identifying a set of familiar topics such as feeling, food, hobbies, sport, leisure times. Recorded voice of some proficient native speakers or conversational dialogue about each topic. Depending on the difficulty and complexity level of the task, the students are asked to do in the whilst-listening, they are usually asked to listen passages twice, or occasionally three times. The specific objectives will be: (1) students' focus will be on meaning, they are trying to understand the

speakers' ideas about related topics (main idea and details of information). (2) The students should listen the tape as often as possible, and the more they listen, the greater their understanding will be. (3) Realizing that initially perhaps students will find difficult to listen different speakers with different speaking rate, accents and style, but after listening several times, they will become used to these.

All learning activities are intended to provide opportunities for students to understand the content of listening effectively. As Sims (2021) mentioned it becomes transformative sign of traditional learning models to a virtual world. Accommodating students' space and opportunities and make sure the interactions run smoothly. Classroom activities in listening class through virtual classes are described in table 1.

Table 1. *Teaching and learning activities*

<b>Teaching phase</b>	<b>Lecturer's Activities</b>	<b>Students' Activities</b>
<b>Opening</b>	Opening the class	Listening and giving necessary response
	Reviewing previous lesson	Turning on the camera and participate actively
	Checking the students' attendance	
<b>Main Activity</b>		
<b>Pre-Listening</b>		
<b>Understand the problem</b>	Guiding students to understand the topic	Watching, listening, taking notes or giving other necessary responses
	Facilitating students to guess related vocabularies meaning	Listening to the teacher's guidance/instruction attentively
<b>Know/ Need to know (define the issue)</b>	Questioning to promote exploration of the issue through topic will be discussed (what the students' know and don't know about the issue)	Listening to the teacher's guidance/instruction attentively, giving necessary response, taking notes
<b>Define the problem statement</b>	Explaining the objectives learning	Listening and giving necessary response (taking notes, etc.)
<b>Whilst-Listening</b>		
<b>Research the knowledge</b>	Giving material in form of Recorded voice of some proficient native speakers or conversational dialogue about each topic	Listening, taking notes, or giving other necessary response
	Facilitating finding main idea and detail information on the material given	Listening, answering the teacher's questions, asking and answering the meaning of vocabulary, doing highlighting
	Facilitating extensive listening comprehension exercises	Reading, paying attention, and accomplishing exercises
	Questioning to promote information and exploration while explaining listening strategies	Exploring material, answering teacher's question actively, taking a note, highlighting
	Reviewing and repeating play when it is necessary, making summary and	Listening to the review and giving necessary response

	checking the students understanding	
<b>Post-Listening</b>		
<b>Investigate the solution</b>	Facilitating small group task and small group discussion	Working in group, giving contribution to the discussion, and presenting the result/ solution
<b>Evaluation and reflection</b>	Giving conclusion about the solution of the problem, certain text purpose, structure and language features	Listening attentively to teacher's explanation, giving appropriate response, taking a note

The result of questionnaire shows that there are several challenges faced by the students in listening class through virtual learning. The first related with content. This is due to limited understanding of vocabulary, as well as the unstable of the voice quality as explained by students.

“In my opinion using virtual conference in listening class is very difficult, because we are encountered with unstable connection, such as bad signal and not clear. It is completed when

we don't know the meaning of some terms or vocabularies stated.”

Limited ability to understand words, phrases, terms and expressions in English that are found in dialogues and long conversations that must be listened virtually become one of some challenges. 23 students (46%) feel that sometimes they find difficulties to understand the meaning of words that are not pronounce clearly; 18 students feel often and the rest always find it difficult.

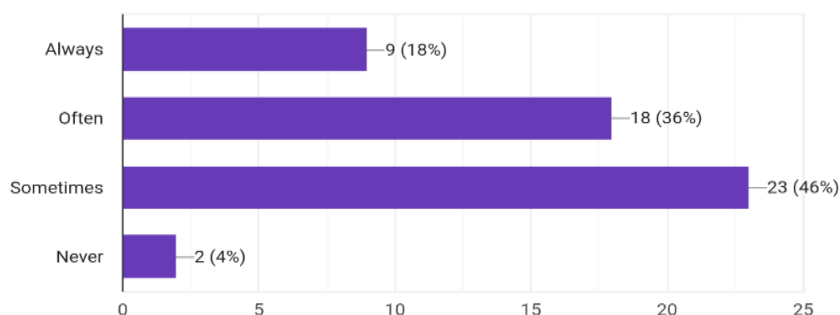


Figure 2. Students response of difficulties related with content

About the limitation of understanding of contents related to vocabulary, the lecturers said that she always giving guidance by introducing topics, list of vocabulary-related to topic and then facilitate them with providing opportunities in order to actively guess meaning of words meaning, grouping, looking for word meaning and so on. **A.**

Further, it explained by students that the other things make virtual learning challenging is that to be always concentrated fully since there is unstable signals and limited internet connection. It makes learning listening a bit difficult than as in offline class. As stated by students,

“I don't think it's very effective because you know we had a lot of problems going through this learning, such as bad signal and there are a lot of students who are shy or afraid to give their opinion”

“I think it is best as offline meeting substitution in pandemic situation but sometimes it is not effective because bad signal or internet connection.

In addition to limitation of internet connection, lecturers took an alternative through asking students to listen passages and materials twice or occasionally three times. It Depends on the difficulty and complexity level of the task.

## CONCLUSION

The findings about students' perception of listening class were analyzed through both internal and external factors; internal factors include students' physical condition, opportunities and motivation as well as students' perceptions of the level of difficulty in listening. In addition to the external factors, the students' perception described in terms of learning materials, lecturers and teaching methods and the use of learning media. In the level of implementation and challenges, students thought that virtual learning is appropriate media of teaching listening during pandemic if lecturers are able to carry out their roles and students are always response the challenge adaptively in both terms of content and technology.

Virtual learning uses a combination of tools to recreate structure and learning experience of a physical classroom. It becomes special application as a substitution of face to face meeting, since it involves learning by interacting with other students and lecturer in classroom context. However, students feel that it does not run effectively due to their limited internet connection and unstable network. Therefore, it is important for lecturers facilitate students' experience in listening class through virtual class. As assumed by the lecturers, it is implemented through the following steps.

Regarding to the limitation of understanding about contents related to vocabulary, lecturers' guiding students in pre-listening stage by introducing topics, list of vocabulary-related to topic and then facilitates them with providing opportunities for students to actively guess meaning of words meaning, grouping, looking for word meaning and so on. In addition to limitation of internet connection, lecturers took an alternative through asking students to listen passages and materials twice or occasionally three times. It depends on the difficulty and complexity level of the task.

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