

EXPLORING EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF PURPOSEFUL LISTENING STRATEGIES IN A LISTENING FOR PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT COURSE

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Abstract

This article explores EFL students' perceptions of purposeful listening strategies implemented in a Listening for Professional Context course at Universitas Negeri Gorontalo. This study used a convergent mixed-methods design; data sources were collected from 23 students in an English Language Education Study program through Likert-scale questionnaires, followed by open-ended reflections. Findings reveal that structured listening cycles were perceived to develop students' focus, metacognitive awareness, strategic autonomy, and engagement with authentic listening materials, suggesting a perceived shift toward more active listening. Pre-listening activities facilitated mental readiness and reduced initial cognitive load, while-listening strategies promoted active processing and real-time monitoring, while post-listening reflection enhanced metacognitive awareness and learner autonomy. Students reported that listening tasks became more manageable and meaningful when guided by explicit strategies, even when working with authentic professional audio texts. These results underscore the importance of integrating purposeful listening cycles into EFL listening instruction, particularly in contexts employing authentic professional materials. The study is limited by a small sample size and reliance on self-reported data. However, it contributes context-specific insight into the use of purposeful listening cycles in the Listening for Professional Context course, with implications for EFL curriculum design and strategy-oriented listening instruction in higher education.

Keywords: *Listening for Professional Context, Metacognitive Strategies, Purposeful Listening, Student Engagement, Students' Perception.*

INTRODUCTION

Listening is an essential skill in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, particularly in academic and professional contexts where learners are required to process spoken information accurately, critically, and efficiently. Contemporary perspectives conceptualize listening comprehension not as passive decoding but as an active, strategic, and cognitively demanding process that involves planning, monitoring, and evaluation (Field, 2009; Vandergrift, 2007; Goh, 2018). This view highlights listening as a form of higher-order cognitive activity in which learners must regulate attention, interpret meaning, and evaluate understanding while processing spoken input in real time. Despite this theoretical shift, listening instruction in many EFL classrooms continues to emphasize product-oriented comprehension tasks that prioritize correct answers over learners' strategic engagement with the listening process (Graham, 2017).

In the Indonesian EFL context, listening instruction frequently adopts a listen-and-answer format, offering limited opportunities for learners to engage in purposeful and reflective listening. Students are often expected to demonstrate comprehension through task completion without explicit guidance on how to approach listening strategically.

Although EFL learners may independently employ a range of cognitive and metacognitive strategies to cope with listening difficulties (Rakhman et al., 2024; Sedhu et al., 2017), these strategies are rarely foregrounded or systematically integrated into classroom instruction. As a result, learners' strategic awareness remains underdeveloped, and there is limited empirical understanding of how students experience and perceive strategy-based listening instruction, particularly at the tertiary level.

These challenges are especially salient in courses such as Listening for Professional Context, which require learners to engage with spoken texts that are propositionally and linguistically complex. Unlike general listening courses that focus primarily on literal comprehension, Listening for Professional Context demands that students follow extended spoken discourse, identify main ideas, interpret speakers' viewpoints and attitudes, and make inferences based on both explicit and implicit information. Listening in this context, therefore, functions not merely as an activity of understanding information but as an analytical process that requires sustained attention, interpretation, and evaluation. Such demands suggest that effective listening in professional contexts cannot rely solely on surface-level comprehension tasks but instead requires structured instructional support that promotes strategic and reflective listening.

Purposeful listening has emerged as an instructional orientation that addresses these demands by foregrounding learners' active involvement in listening through goal setting, guided processing, and reflection. Grounded in metacognitive theory, purposeful listening emphasizes planning before listening, monitoring comprehension during listening, and evaluating understanding after listening (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012; Oxford, 2017). Rather than treating listening strategies as isolated techniques, purposeful listening conceptualizes listening as a coherent instructional cycle in which learners are guided to listen with clear purposes and to reflect on their listening processes and outcomes. Empirical studies across EFL higher education contexts have demonstrated that explicit metacognitive and strategy-based listening instruction supports learners' listening comprehension, strategic awareness, and engagement (Chou, 2017; Fiani et al., 2019; Khonamri & Ahmadi, 2015).

Recent research has further highlighted the importance of learner autonomy and perception in listening development. Strategy-oriented instruction has been shown to foster independent listening habits and more purposeful engagement with authentic listening materials, both inside and outside the classroom (Picard & Velautham, 2016; Yang, 2020; Nguyen, 2018). Learners' perceptions of listening strategies play a critical role in shaping their willingness to persist, regulate attention, and evaluate comprehension during challenging listening tasks (Chen & Tseng, 2017; El-Dakhs et al., 2022). When learners perceive listening as a manageable and meaningful process, they are more likely to engage actively and take responsibility for their learning.

While a growing body of research has examined the effects of listening strategy instruction on performance outcomes, fewer studies have explored learners' perceptions of purposeful listening when it is implemented as an integrated instructional cycle, particularly within professional-context listening courses in Indonesian higher education. Existing mixed-methods and needs-based studies in Asian EFL settings suggest that integrated listening strategy instruction aligns well with learners' academic and professional needs (Ngo, 2016; Nguyen, 2018). However, context-specific evidence from Indonesian universities, especially regarding how students experience purposeful listening in professional listening courses, remains limited.

To address this gap, the present study explores EFL students' perceptions of purposeful listening strategies implemented in a second-semester undergraduate course, *Listening for Professional Context*, at Universitas Negeri Gorontalo. The course integrates purposeful listening strategies through structured pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening activities using authentic professional listening materials. By foregrounding students' perspectives, this study seeks to examine how purposeful listening strategies are perceived to shape students' engagement and perceived comprehension. The findings are expected to provide context-specific insights to inform strategy-oriented listening instruction and EFL curriculum design in higher education, particularly for courses that aim to prepare learners for academic and professional communication.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, a convergent mixed-methods approach examined how students view and experience purposeful listening strategies in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting. The use of both quantitative and qualitative data was intended to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research focus. Using quantitative data allowed for guided insight into students' general perspectives, while using qualitative data allowed for deep and thoughtful reflections into the students' experience of learning.

The study was conducted in a second-semester course called *Listening for Professional Context*, which is part of the English Language Education Study Program at Universitas Negeri Gorontalo. This required course aimed to develop students' strategic listening through authentic audio material in professional contexts such as education, business, and tourism. The course is intended to integrate listening strategies in a structured way through pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening activities.

The participants were 23 undergraduate students enrolled in the course. In addition, the course instructor was involved in the instructional implementation of purposeful listening strategies; however, the instructor did not serve as a data source for analysis. The instructor's role was limited to providing contextual information regarding course design and implementation to support the interpretation of student-generated data.

Data collection was completed through a questionnaire of Likert-based, closed-ended questions and open-ended questions. The first section of the questionnaire was concerned with students' engagement with purposeful listening. The second section asked about perceived comprehension. Both sections used a 5-point Likert scale with endpoints of 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree. The last section comprised five open-ended questions designed to elicit students' reflections, strategies used, and perceived benefits or limitations of the listening activities used in this course. The combination of closed- and open-ended items was intended to capture both the breadth and depth of students' perceptions.

The questionnaire was administered at the end of the instructional cycle, after students had experienced purposeful listening strategies across multiple pre-, whilst-, and post-listening activities throughout the semester. This timing ensured that students' responses were informed by sustained exposure to the instructional approach rather than isolated listening tasks. All participants completed the questionnaire voluntarily as part of the research data collection.

Quantitative data from the Likert-scale items were analyzed descriptively to identify overall trends and levels of agreement regarding students' engagement and perceived comprehension. Qualitative data from the open-ended responses were analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns related to strategy use, engagement, and metacognitive awareness. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings enabled a more comprehensive interpretation of students' perceptions of purposeful listening strategies.

This study involved a relatively small sample drawn from a single course, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Consequently, the results are intended to provide context-specific insights rather than broad generalizations across EFL settings. Nonetheless, the in-depth examination of students' perceptions offers valuable implications for purposeful listening instruction in similar higher education contexts.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Likert-scale responses from the 23 undergraduate participants indicate a generally positive perception of the purposeful listening strategies implemented in the EFL course. In accordance with the research focus, the findings highlight how students perceived their engagement and comprehension across the pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening phases. Quantitative trends provide an overview of students' perceptions, while selected qualitative excerpts are used to contextualize and deepen the interpretation of these patterns. Taken together, the findings suggest that students experienced purposeful listening as a structured and supportive instructional approach rather than as a series of isolated listening techniques.

In terms of engagement, students consistently reported heightened focus and readiness when listening tasks were preceded by explicit goals and contextual

preparation. Quantitative responses showed strong agreement with statements indicating that pre-listening activities helped students prepare mentally and attend more intentionally to the listening task. This suggests that purposeful listening functioned as an entry point for engagement, shifting students away from passive listening habits toward a more goal-directed orientation. Qualitative responses further illustrate this pattern. One student reflected that imagining the context beforehand made listening “easier to understand,” indicating that preparatory activities facilitated mental readiness and reduced initial cognitive load.

These findings align with metacognitive listening research emphasizing the importance of planning and goal setting as foundational components of effective listening (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012; Chou, 2017). When learners are guided to anticipate content and clarify listening purposes, they are better able to allocate attentional resources and regulate focus. Similar patterns have been reported in Asian EFL higher education contexts, where structured pre-listening activities help students engage more meaningfully with authentic materials that might otherwise be perceived as overwhelming (Picard & Velautham, 2016; Nguyen, 2018). In this study, pre-listening activities appeared to function not merely as warm-up tasks, but as a critical phase for initiating engagement with complex professional listening texts.

During the while-listening phase, students perceived themselves as more cognitively engaged through the use of strategies such as prediction, selective re-listening, and note-taking. Rather than approaching listening as a linear decoding task, students described listening with a specific purpose and actively monitoring their understanding while the audio was ongoing. This perceived shift from passive reception to active processing suggests that strategy use supported sustained engagement throughout the listening task. Students reported being less likely to disengage when encountering unfamiliar vocabulary or fast speech, as strategies provided them with alternative ways to remain involved in the listening process.

This finding is consistent with previous research demonstrating that cognitive and metacognitive strategies during listening promote real-time monitoring and reduce learners’ tendency to give up when comprehension breaks down (Khonamri & Ahmadi, 2015; Chen & Tseng, 2017; Fiani et al., 2019). It also supports recent Indonesian studies indicating that strategy-oriented listening instruction enhances students’ attentional control and active participation in EFL classrooms (Manihuruk & Sidabutar, 2022; Mawaddha et al., 2024). Within the context of *Listening for Professional Context*, these strategies appeared particularly important given the linguistic density and propositional complexity of the listening materials.

Post-listening activities were perceived as contributing significantly to students’ sense of autonomy and responsibility for learning. Many students reported increased awareness of which strategies supported their comprehension and why. One participant stated that they now understood “what strategy works for me and why,” suggesting the

emergence of metacognitive regulation. Rather than functioning as an add-on or follow-up exercise, post-listening reflection appeared to consolidate engagement by encouraging students to evaluate both their listening outcomes and their strategic processes.

This finding resonates with research that positions reflection and evaluation as essential components of metacognitive development and autonomous listening behavior (Oxford, 2017; Picard & Velautham, 2016; Yang, 2020). By engaging in post-listening reflection, students were encouraged to take ownership of their learning and to view listening improvement as a process that can be managed and refined over time. In this sense, purposeful listening supported not only immediate engagement but also longer-term development of self-regulated listening habits.

With regard to comprehension, students perceived that the structured use of strategies across listening phases supported both global understanding (e.g., identifying main ideas and overall meaning) and detailed comprehension (e.g., recognizing specific information and speaker attitudes). Pre-listening activities helped students anticipate key ideas, whilst-listening strategies facilitated the identification and confirmation of important information, and post-listening reflection aided in consolidating and clarifying meaning. Overall, students reported that listening tasks became more manageable and meaningful when guided by explicit strategies, even when working with authentic professional audio texts.

These perceptions align with previous studies indicating that metacognitively informed listening instruction enhances learners' confidence and perceived comprehension in EFL contexts (Sedhu et al., 2017; Fathi et al., 2020). Although this study did not measure listening performance directly, students' perceptions suggest that purposeful listening reduced anxiety and cognitive overload, enabling them to approach challenging listening tasks with greater confidence and persistence.

The thematic analysis of open-ended responses reinforced the quantitative trends and revealed three interrelated themes: increased awareness and autonomy, enhanced engagement through structured preparation and authentic materials, and preference for specific strategies such as selective re-listening and prediction. Rather than emerging as discrete or fragmented outcomes, these themes collectively illustrate how students experienced purposeful listening as a coherent and integrated instructional process. Students did not describe strategies as isolated techniques, but as interrelated tools that supported their listening across different stages of instruction.

This finding supports evidence from mixed-methods and perception-based studies suggesting that learners value listening strategy instruction when it is clearly structured, consistently applied, and aligned with instructional goals (Ngo, 2016; El-Dakhs et al., 2022). The integration of quantitative and qualitative data in this study thus strengthens the interpretation that purposeful listening was experienced as a meaningful pedagogical framework rather than a procedural requirement.

Taken together, the findings directly address the research focus on students' perceptions of purposeful listening strategies. Students perceived purposeful listening not merely as a set of techniques but as a structured learning process that supported engagement, comprehension, and self-regulation. Although the study does not claim measurable gains in listening performance, it demonstrates that students experienced listening as more purposeful and manageable when guided by explicit strategy instruction. This supports arguments that strategy-oriented listening instruction holds pedagogical value even when outcomes are examined through perceptual and experiential lenses rather than performance-based measures (Graham & Santos, 2015; El-Dakhs et al., 2022).

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The study involved a relatively small sample from a single course, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported perceptions rather than objective performance data suggests that the findings should be interpreted as context-specific insights rather than claims of instructional effectiveness. Future research may consider integrating performance measures or longitudinal designs to further examine the impact of purposeful listening strategies.

Despite these limitations, the study offers clear pedagogical implications. The findings underscore the importance of integrating purposeful listening cycles into EFL listening instruction, particularly in courses that employ authentic professional materials. Emphasizing goal setting, guided processing, and reflective evaluation can enhance student engagement and foster greater awareness of listening processes. For EFL curriculum design and lecturer development, the results highlight the need to move beyond procedural *listen-and-answer* practices toward structured, strategy-oriented listening instruction that actively involves learners throughout the listening process, as advocated by recent studies in Asian and Indonesian EFL contexts (Fiani et al., 2019; Nguyen, 2018).

CONCLUSION

This study explored EFL students' views of purposeful listening strategies implemented in a university-level listening course at Universitas Negeri Gorontalo. Using a convergent mixed-methods design, the findings indicate that students perceived purposeful listening as a structured and meaningful learning process that supported their engagement and perceived comprehension of authentic listening tasks.

Students reported that purposeful listening strategies enhanced their attentional focus, promoted active involvement during listening, and increased awareness of how listening goals and strategies support understanding. Across the instructional cycle, students perceived a shift from passive listening toward more intentional and reflective listening behavior, directly addressing the study's research focus on students' experiences and perceptions.

Although limited by a small sample size and reliance on self-reported data, this study contributes context-specific evidence on the role of purposeful listening strategies in Indonesian higher education. Specifically, it demonstrates how integrating structured listening cycles within an EFL listening course can support student engagement and metacognitive awareness when working with authentic materials.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings suggest that EFL listening instruction benefits from the systematic integration of purposeful listening strategies that emphasize goal-setting, guided processing, and post-listening reflection. These results have implications for curriculum design and lecturer development by highlighting the need to move beyond procedural listening tasks toward strategy-oriented instruction.

Future research should extend this inquiry by examining purposeful listening instruction across multiple courses or institutions and by incorporating performance-based measures to complement students' perceptions. Such studies would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how purposeful listening strategies influence listening development over time.

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