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# Exploring students' difficulties and strategies in listening comprehension

**ABSTRACT** - This study investigates students' difficulties in mastering listening comprehension and the strategies they employ to overcome difficulties in the English Education Department of UIN Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh. This research aims to identify the types of listening difficulties experienced by students across semester levels and to examine the learning strategies they use based on Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). This study employed a mixed-method design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The participants consisted of 104 students from different semester levels selected through stratified sampling. Quantitative data were collected using a questionnaire adapted from SILL, with mean scores categorized according to Oxford's rating scale. Qualitative data were gathered through focus group discussions (FGD) and analyzed using Miles and Huberman's (1992) interactive model, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that students experience listening difficulties at a medium level across five main indicators: accent and intonation, sentence structure, keyword identification, distinguishing key information, and understanding real-life situations. Among these, accent variation and sentence complexity were reported as the most challenging aspects. In terms of strategies, cognitive strategies emerged as the most frequently used, followed by compensation and social strategies, while memory, metacognitive, and affective strategies were used at a medium level. Higher-semester students demonstrated advanced strategic awareness and use of metacognitive and social strategies compared to lower-semester students. The findings contribute theoretically to the understanding of listening comprehension difficulties and strategy use in EFL contexts and provide practical implications for lecturers to design more strategy-oriented listening instruction.

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## 1. Introduction

Listening is a fundamental language skill essential for effective communication. Despite its importance, EFL learners commonly perceive listening as more difficult to master than other skills. Students often face challenges including limited vocabulary, unfamiliar idiomatic expressions, and difficulty understanding native speakers who speak rapidly.

Research has consistently documented these difficulties. Putri (2018) identified unfamiliar terminology, speech speed, and inadequate equipment as primary obstacles among Indonesian EFL students. Zulfikar (2020) further categorized influencing factors into speaker variables (speech rate, unclear pronunciation), stimulus variables, background variables, and listener variables. Vandergrift (2007) provided a comprehensive framework of listening difficulties, including phonological processing (accents and intonation), syntactic processing (complex sentence structures), lexical knowledge (vocabulary and idioms), discourse processing (distinguishing key information), and internal factors (fatigue, stress, distraction).

Given these challenges, investigating the strategies students employ to overcome listening difficulties is equally critical. Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) classifies language learning strategies into six categories: memory (storing and retrieving information), cognitive (practicing and analyzing language forms), compensatory (guessing meanings or using alternatives), metacognitive (planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning), affective (managing emotions and motivation), and social (learning through interaction and feedback).

Preliminary research conducted on October 7, 2025, at the English Education Department of UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh revealed that most students identify vocabulary limitations, unfamiliar idiomatic expressions, and speech speed as their primary listening difficulties. Students reported using peer assistance, dictionaries, and online resources as coping strategies. Notably, the department does not offer a subject dedicated solely to listening skills; instead, listening is integrated with reading, speaking, and writing across three sequential courses: Basic Language Skills (first semester), Intermediate Language Skills (second semester), and Advanced Language Skills (third semester).

Globally, EFL students face similar challenges. Hamouda (2013) noted that fast-talking speakers hinder comprehension even when vocabulary is familiar. Saraswaty (2018) highlighted difficulties related to recording quality, cultural differences, accents, unfamiliar vocabulary, and speech length and speed.

Recognizing the interplay between listening difficulties and strategy use, this study aims to investigate the experiences of English students at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for students, researchers, and lecturers in developing effective learning strategies and overcoming listening comprehension challenges.

Theoretically, this study contributes to second language acquisition research by applying Vandergrift's (2007) framework of listening difficulties and Oxford's (1990) SILL taxonomy of language learning strategies. By examining how memory, cognitive, metacognitive, social, compensation, and affective strategies are employed at different stages of academic development, the study strengthens conceptual links between strategy use, learner autonomy,

and listening proficiency. Practically, the findings offer educators a clearer understanding of authentic student challenges, enabling the design of more appropriate instructional materials and classroom activities. For students, the study raises awareness of effective listening strategies—such as regular exposure to English audiovisual media, strategic repetition, shadowing, peer interaction, and self-regulated learning practices—that can significantly enhance comprehension beyond the classroom.

The scope of this study is delimited to examining listening comprehension difficulties and language learning strategies among English Education students at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, framed by Vandergrift's (2007) classification of listening challenges and Oxford's (1990) SILL taxonomy. These two theoretical frameworks provide a solid conceptual foundation for understanding both the nature of students' listening difficulties and the specific strategies they employ to overcome them.

## 2. Literature review

Listening is an active process of constructing meaning from spoken input, requiring linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge (Buck, 2001). It is essential for language acquisition, as it provides the input that supports speaking, reading, and writing development (Hamouda, 2013). At UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, listening is not taught independently but integrated within Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced Language Skills courses. This integrated curriculum presents unique challenges for students. Therefore, this study investigates listening difficulties and the strategies students employ to overcome them in this instructional context.

### *2.1. The nature of the listening process*

Listening is a complex and active cognitive process rather than a passive act of hearing. It involves the listener's ability to receive, interpret, and construct meaning from spoken language in real time. According to Rost (2016), listening requires learners to process acoustic signals while simultaneously activating linguistic knowledge and contextual understanding. This process demands rapid mental operations, as listeners must segment continuous speech into recognizable units, identify sounds, words, and grammatical structures, and integrate them into meaningful discourse. Consequently, listening comprehension is often considered one of the most challenging skills for second or foreign language learners.

In addition to linguistic processing, listening is influenced by metacognitive factors that regulate how learners' approach and manage listening tasks. Goh (2000) argues that successful listeners actively plan before listening, monitor their understanding during listening, and evaluate their performance after completing the task. These metacognitive processes allow learners to identify comprehension breakdowns and apply appropriate strategies to resolve them. Similarly, Vandergrift and Goh (2012) highlight that awareness of listening strategies plays a critical role in developing autonomous listeners, particularly in EFL contexts where exposure to authentic spoken input is limited.

Furthermore, the listening process is shaped by affective and contextual factors such as motivation, anxiety, speech rate, accent, and the authenticity of listening materials. Buck (2001)

notes that listener-related factors, including emotional state and attentional capacity, can significantly influence comprehension outcomes. High anxiety levels may hinder learners' ability to process spoken input efficiently, while unfamiliar accents and rapid speech may overload cognitive resources. Therefore, understanding the nature of the listening process requires acknowledging its multidimensional character, which encompasses cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and contextual dimensions.

*2.2. Students' difficulties in listening comprehension*

Researchers found numerous obstacles in listening comprehension, including difficulty recognizing words, unfamiliar topics, background noise, and inadequate listening equipment. A background is important in listening comprehension because if a student has much more exposure to a model of a topic, a familiar topic, or familiar vocabulary, it will allow them to grasp better when listening. The final aspect is the listener itself; internal and external factors most likely influence the listener's ability to comprehend. From a cognitive perspective, listening comprehension operates through the interaction of bottom-up and top-down processing mechanisms. Bottom-up processing refers to the decoding of linguistic input from sounds to words and sentences, whereas top-down processing involves using background knowledge, contextual clues, and prior experiences to interpret meaning (Field, 2008).

According to Vandergrift (2007), there are several difficulties faced by English learners in improving their listening skills. First, students usually have difficulty understanding the accents and intonations of different native speakers. For example, students who are used to hearing American English will face difficulties in understanding native Australian or British English speakers. Next is the difficulty faced by students in understanding complex sentence structures. Students also struggle to understand conversations spoken quickly by native English speakers. Students also often struggle to understand informal or non-standard language. Vandergrift further explains the difficulty of students in understanding the material presented in different situations, such as in class, in daily conversation, or in English commonly used for presentations. The last difficulty is understanding the material presented due to internal factors, such as fatigue, stress, or distraction.

Vandergrift (2007) emphasizes that effective listening depends on the dynamic interplay between these two processes. When learners lack sufficient vocabulary or phonological awareness, bottom-up processing becomes inefficient, forcing them to rely heavily on top-down strategies, which may result in partial or inaccurate comprehension. Additionally, Saraswaty (2018) also reported and highlighted certain challenges that students may face in listening comprehension, such as the quality of recording materials, cultural differences, accents, unfamiliar vocabulary, length, and speed of listening. Somehow, throughout the learning process, the content provided by the teacher in the classroom is not always adequate for the level of student knowledge, or the recorder may malfunction while playing. The language that students study and listen to comes from a different place and culture. Therefore, there may be numerous disparities in linguistic areas such as grammar, pronunciation, and syntax.

*2.3. Strategy inventory for language learning (SILL)*

Mastering listening skills can be difficult, particularly in different environments such as language learning for students, interpersonal communication, and professional settings. Some useful strategies for improving listening skills are active listening, exposure to varied listening materials, creating a supportive environment, developing different listening skills, using internal dialogue strategies, practicing reflective listening, and focusing on mental imagery. Many scholars, such as Bingol et al. (2014), and Rost et al. (1991), said that there are three kinds of strategies in listening comprehension: cognitive, meta-cognitive, and socio-emotional strategies. These strategies can vary depending on the level of the learners.

However, even though many experts explain listening skill strategies, this research focuses on strategies based on Oxford's strategies, SILL (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning). Oxford (1990) identifies six categories of language learning strategies: memory strategy, cognitive strategies, affective strategies, social strategies, functional strategies, communicative strategies, and meta-cognitive strategies.

## 3. Method

This study employed a mixed-methods design to investigate listening comprehension difficulties and language learning strategies among English Education students at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh. The quantitative component addressed two research questions: what difficulties students face in mastering listening skills, and what strategies they employ to overcome these difficulties. The qualitative component explored students' efforts to ensure the effectiveness of their chosen strategies. The research was conducted at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, involving students who had completed or were enrolled in Basic, Intermediate, or Advanced Language Skills courses. A combined purposive and stratified sampling technique was employed, resulting in 104 participants from five classes across semesters one to five, with approximately 25 students additionally participating in focus group discussions (FGD).

Data were collected using two primary instruments. First, Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) was administered via an online questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The instrument comprised 26 items measuring listening difficulties (5 items) and strategies (21 items), categorized into direct strategies (memory, cognitive, compensation) and indirect strategies (metacognitive, affective, social). All items were translated into Bahasa Indonesia to ensure comprehension. Second, FGDs were conducted to gather in-depth qualitative data regarding students' efforts to ensure strategy effectiveness. Questions were structured around Vandergrift's (2007) framework of listening difficulties, including phonological challenges, syntactic complexity, lexical limitations, discourse-level processing, and listener-related factors.

Quantitative data from the SILL questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions, means, and standard deviations, with results categorized into high, medium, or low levels of difficulty or strategy use. Qualitative data from FGDs were analyzed using Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's (2014) three-component model: data

condensation (transcribing and categorizing responses according to Vandergrift's framework), data display (organizing themes into tables and narrative summaries), and conclusion drawing (identifying patterns and relationships between difficulties and strategies by triangulating FGD findings with questionnaire results). The integration of quantitative and qualitative data enabled a comprehensive understanding of students' listening challenges and their strategic responses. This mixed-methods approach not only captured general trends across the participant population but also provided nuanced insights into individual experiences and contextual factors influencing listening comprehension in this specific EFL setting.

## 4. Findings

This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section discusses students' difficulties in listening comprehension, which were analyzed using Vandegrift's (2007) theoretical framework. The second section discusses students' strategies based on questionnaire data using Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). Furthermore, the research findings are interpreted and discussed in relation to relevant linguistic theories and previous studies to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon under consideration.

### *4.1. Students' difficulties in listening comprehension*

This research explored the difficulties faced by students in listening comprehension through Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and a questionnaire. Researchers used a questionnaire to identify the level of difficulty students faced in listening comprehension. To gain more in-depth information, the researcher also explored the difficulties using focus group discussions (FGDs). Questions were prepared based on Vandergrift (2007), which was further categorized into five major difficulties in listening comprehension among EFL learners, including phonological challenges, lexical limitations, syntactic complexity, discourse-level processing, and listener-related factors such as attention and affective conditions.

#### *4.1.1. Difficulty in processing phonological features (Accent, intonation, and speech rate)*

According to Vandergrift (2007), one of the primary difficulties in listening comprehension arises from learners' limited ability to process phonological features such as accent variation, intonation, reduced forms, and rapid speech. The findings of this study indicate that accent and intonation constitute the most prominent listening difficulties among students, as reflected in the quantitative results, where the mean score for accent and intonation was relatively high (M = 3.08). Qualitative data further support this finding, as many students reported difficulty understanding native speakers who speak quickly or use unfamiliar accents.

Students often struggle to segment the speech stream, recognize word boundaries, and identify reduced forms in natural speech. This difficulty is particularly evident when students are exposed to spontaneous or authentic audio materials rather than scripted classroom recordings. These findings align with Vandergrift's assertion that phonological variation significantly interferes with learners' ability to decode spoken input, especially in EFL contexts

where exposure to diverse accents is limited. (S.1) Explained: "When native speakers talk very fast, I cannot catch the words clearly, especially when they connect words".

Quantitatively, this response corresponds with the relatively high mean score on questionnaire items related to speech rate and accent difficulty, indicating a medium to high level of perceived difficulty. Qualitatively, the statement reflects problems in speech segmentation and reduced forms, which hinder real-time phonological processing as described in Vandergrift's (2007) listening comprehension framework. (S.2) Explained: "Different accents confuse me because I am used to listening to only one type of English accent".

The questionnaire data indicate that accent variation remains a significant source of difficulty, particularly among lower-semester students. From the qualitative perspective, this statement highlights limited exposure to diverse phonological input, which increases cognitive load during listening and reduces comprehension accuracy. (S.3) Explained: "Sometimes I know the words, but when they are pronounced differently, I don't recognize them".

This response supports the quantitative finding that students experience difficulty recognizing familiar vocabulary in connected speech. Qualitatively, it indicates a mismatch between lexical knowledge and phonological decoding ability, which disrupts bottom-up processing during listening.

*4.1.2. Difficulty related to lexical knowledge (Vocabulary and idiomatic expressions)*

Vandergrift (2007) emphasizes that insufficient lexical knowledge is another major source of listening difficulty, as unfamiliar vocabulary can disrupt the comprehension process. The results of this study reveal that students frequently encounter difficulty when listening to materials that contain unfamiliar words or idiomatic expressions. Although students may understand individual words, they often fail to grasp the overall meaning when those words are used idiomatically or in unfamiliar contexts.

Qualitative responses indicate that students tend to pause mentally to interpret unfamiliar vocabulary, which can cause them to miss subsequent information. This lexical limitation is particularly problematic in real-life listening situations, where speech proceeds continuously without pauses for clarification. These findings confirm Vandergrift's view that limited vocabulary and lack of familiarity with formulaic language hinder learners' ability to maintain continuous comprehension. (S.4) Explained: "If I hear one unfamiliar word, I focus too much on it and miss the next piece of information".

Quantitative results show a medium level of difficulty related to vocabulary limitations. Qualitatively, this statement illustrates cognitive overload, where excessive attention to unknown lexical items interferes with overall discourse comprehension. (S.5) Explained: "Idioms are very confusing because the meaning is different from the words.

The questionnaire results indicate that idiomatic expressions pose notable difficulty. Qualitative evidence suggests that students struggle to apply top-down processing and cultural knowledge when interpreting non-literal language, resulting in partial or incorrect comprehension. (S.6) Explained: "I usually translate word by word, but it does not work when the speaker uses idiomatic expressions)".

This finding aligns with quantitative data showing frequent reliance on mental translation strategies. Qualitatively, it demonstrates that word-by-word translation limits students' ability to process meaning holistically, especially in authentic spoken discourse.

*4.1.3. Difficulty in processing syntactic structures*

Another difficulty identified by Vandergrift (2007) relates to learners' limited ability to process complex sentence structures during listening. The quantitative findings of this study indicate that sentence structure presents a medium level of difficulty (M = 3.05). Students reported challenges in understanding long sentences, subordinate clauses, and unfamiliar grammatical constructions, especially when these occur in fast-paced speech.

From the qualitative data, several students explained that they could understand individual words but struggled to integrate them into a coherent meaning when sentences became syntactically complex. This finding reflects Vandergrift's explanation that syntactic processing demands high cognitive resources, which can overload learners' working memory during real-time listening. (S.7) Explained: *"*Long sentences make me confused because I forget the beginning before the sentence ends".

Quantitative analysis shows medium difficulty in understanding complex sentence structures. Qualitatively, this response reflects limitations in working memory capacity, which affect students' ability to integrate syntactic information during listening. (S.8) Explained: *"*I can understand the words, but I don't understand the meaning of the sentence".

The questionnaire data indicate difficulty at the sentence level. From the qualitative perspective, this response suggests that students have not fully developed the ability to synthesize lexical input into coherent syntactic meaning. (S.9) Explained: *"*When the speaker uses complex grammar, I lose my focus".

This statement supports the quantitative finding that syntactic complexity increases listening difficulty. Qualitatively, it suggests that an increased grammatical load negatively affects attention and continuity of comprehension.

*4.1.4. Difficulty in identifying key information and discourse meaning*

Vandergrift (2007) also highlights learners' difficulty in distinguishing important information from less relevant details as a major listening challenge. In this study, students reported medium difficulty in identifying keywords and prioritizing essential information, particularly in longer or more complex listening texts. The mean score for distinguishing key information (M = 3.06) suggests that students are not completely incapable but still experience confusion in organizing incoming information.

Qualitative findings reveal that students often focus on understanding every word rather than extracting the main idea, which leads to comprehension breakdowns. This tendency indicates limited development of top-down processing skills, as described by Vandergrift (2007), where learners fail to use contextual clues and background knowledge effectively to construct meaning at the discourse level. (S.10) Explained that "I try to understand every word, so I miss the main idea".

Quantitative data reveal medium difficulty in identifying main ideas. Qualitatively, this response reflects excessive bottom-up processing and insufficient use of selective listening strategies. (S.11) Explained that "I don't know which information is important in long listening texts". The questionnaire results suggest difficulty with discourse-level comprehension. Qualitatively, this statement indicates underdeveloped skills in prioritizing and organizing information while listening. (S.12) Explained that "I feel lost when the topic changes suddenly". This finding corresponds with questionnaire items related to discourse coherence. Qualitative evidence shows limited ability to use contextual cues and prediction strategies during listening.

*4.1.5. Listener-related factors (Concentration, anxiety, and fatigue)*

In addition to linguistic factors, Vandergrift (2007) emphasizes the role of listener-related variables such as concentration, anxiety, motivation, and mental fatigue in listening comprehension. The findings of this study suggest that students' listening difficulties are sometimes exacerbated by internal factors, including loss of concentration, nervousness when listening to native speakers, and fear of missing information.

Several students reported that they felt anxious during listening tests or when exposed to unfamiliar accents, which negatively affected their ability to focus and process information. These findings support Vandergrift's claim that affective factors can interfere with cognitive processing during listening, particularly in academic or evaluative contexts. (S.13) Explained that "I feel nervous during listening tests, and it affects my understanding". The findings indicate that affective factors contribute to listening difficulty. Qualitatively, this statement confirms that anxiety interferes with cognitive processing during listening tasks as explained by (S.14) stating that "If the audio is too long, I lose concentration easily".

Questionnaire results show medium difficulty related to sustained attention. Qualitative evidence highlights limited concentration endurance, especially in extended listening activities as reflected in the following excerpt: "I am afraid of missing information, so I become more stresses". This response supports quantitative findings regarding anxiety-related difficulty. Qualitatively, it illustrates how fear of failure amplifies stress and negatively impacts listening performance. The findings reveal that students generally experience a medium level of listening difficulty, with the most prominent challenges being accent and intonation, complex sentence structures, and identifying key information within fast or informal speech. These results align closely with Vandegrift's (2007) theory and previous research indicating that unfamiliar accents, rapid delivery, and syntactically complex utterances often hinder comprehension among EFL learners (Field, 2008; Rost, 2016).

The medium scores across most indicators suggest that students are not entirely overwhelmed by listening tasks, but they frequently struggle when input becomes less predictable or requires rapid processing. The difficulty related to accent and intonation confirms Vandergrift and Goh's (2012) observation that phonological variation significantly affects learners' ability to segment the speech stream. This is particularly relevant in contexts where students are more accustomed to standardized or "textbook" English, which is often slower and more carefully articulated than authentic spoken discourse.

Similarly, difficulty in processing complex sentence structures mirrors findings by Cross (2012), who noted that learners with limited syntactic awareness tend to lose track of meaning when sentences contain subordinate clauses, passive constructions, or unfamiliar grammatical patterns. Students' challenges in distinguishing important from unimportant information also reflect limits in attentional control, which is a key component of metacognitive listening (Goh, 2000).

### *4.2. Students' strategies to overcome the difficulties in listening comprehension across semester levels*

Based on Oxford's (1990) classification, students' listening strategies are divided into direct strategies (memory, cognitive, and compensation) and indirect strategies (metacognitive, affective, and social). The findings of this study reveal varying degrees of strategy use across these six categories, as reflected in both quantitative questionnaire data and qualitative FGD responses.

#### *4.2.1. Memory strategies used across semester levels*

The quantitative data indicated that students demonstrate a medium level of memory strategy use in listening comprehension, with a mean score of 3.31. The largest proportion of responses falls within the Neutral category (30.8%), suggesting that many students neither consistently nor consciously employ memory strategies during listening tasks. Meanwhile, 44.2% of the respondents reported positive engagement with memory strategies, as reflected by Agree (22.1%) and Strongly Agree (22.1%) responses. This implies that nearly half of the students actively use techniques such as associating new words with prior knowledge or reviewing vocabulary to support comprehension. However, the presence of 25% negative responses (Strongly Disagree and Disagree combined) indicates that a considerable number of students still struggle to apply memory strategies effectively, possibly due to limited awareness or insufficient training in strategic listening.

**Table 4.2.1**
Students' responses to questions of memory strategies.

| Likert Scale | Frequency (n) | Percentage | Valid Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 (Strongly Disagree) | 11 | 10.6% | 10.6% |
| 2 (Disagree) | 15 | 14.4% | 14.4% |
| 3 (Neutral) | 32 | 30.8% | 30.8% |
| 4 (Agree) | 23 | 22.1% | 22.1% |
| 5 (Strongly Agree) | 23 | 22.1% | 22.1% |
| Total | 104 | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| Mean = 3.31 (Medium Level) | | | |

Qualitative findings from the FGD support this result. Students reported reviewing vocabulary lists or replaying audio after class, but rarely preparing vocabulary systematically

before listening tasks. This explains why memory strategies appear to be a medium used; students recognize their usefulness, but lack structured habits to apply them consistently during listening activities.

The findings indicated that the use of memory strategies varies noticeably across semester levels. First-semester students demonstrated relatively limited engagement with memory strategies, with approximately 39% agreeing that they employ techniques such as grouping vocabulary or reviewing listening materials, while a large proportion (around 44%) selected neutral responses. This suggested that early-stage students have not yet developed consistent habits for storing and retrieving listening-related information. Their listening difficulty scores remain comparatively high, particularly in relation to vocabulary recognition and sound discrimination.

In contrast, third-semester students show a medium increase in memory strategy use. Approximately 48% of students at this level reported agreement with statements related to structured review and vocabulary association, while neutral responses decreased to about 34%. Fifth-semester students exhibit the highest level of memory strategy use, with approximately 57% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they actively review listening input and organize vocabulary systematically. This quantitative progression indicates that memory strategies become more prominent as students gain experience and linguistic exposure.

Qualitative data from FGD further elaborated these trends. First-semester students frequently reported memorizing isolated words after listening activities, often without revisiting them later. Their comments suggest that memory strategies are used reactively rather than strategically, which limits their effectiveness in supporting long-term listening development. The third and fifth-semester students, however, described more deliberate memory-related practices. Participants reported keeping vocabulary journals, reviewing expressions encountered in audio materials, and linking new words to familiar contexts. Fifth-semester students, in particular, emphasized repeated exposure and structured review as essential for internalizing pronunciation patterns and lexical chunks, reinforcing the quantitative findings.

Overall, the findings suggested a clear relationship between semester level, memory strategy use, and listening ability. As students' academic progress, their increased reliance on structured memory strategies contributes to more efficient lexical access during listening tasks, reducing comprehension breakdowns caused by unfamiliar vocabulary and supporting higher-level listening performance.

*4.2.2. Cognitive strategies used across semester levels*

Cognitive strategies appeared to be among the most frequently employed direct strategies, as reflected by a relatively higher mean score of 3.44, which falls between the medium and high usage levels. Approximately 50% of the respondents reported frequent use of cognitive strategies, with 26.0% agreeing and 24.0% strongly agreeing that they engage in activities such as note-taking, repetition, inferencing, and focusing on key ideas during listening. The Neutral responses (28.8%) suggest that some students apply these strategies inconsistently or only in certain contexts. Notably, the relatively low percentage of negative responses (21.2%) indicates

that cognitive strategies are generally accessible and familiar to students, likely because these strategies are often implicitly encouraged in classroom listening activities.

**Table 4.2.2**
Students' responses to questions of cognitive strategies used.

| Likert Scale | Frequency (n) | Percentage | Valid Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 (Strongly Disagree) | 9 | 8.7% | 8.7% |
| 2 (Disagree) | 13 | 12.5% | 12.5% |
| 3 (Neutral) | 30 | 28.8% | 28.8% |
| 4 (Agree) | 27 | 26.0% | 26.0% |
| 5 (Strongly Agree) | 25 | 24.0% | 24.0% |
| Total | 104 | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| Mean = 3.44 (Medium - High Level) | | | |

FGD data strongly reinforced these quantitative findings. Students consistently described replaying audio recordings multiple times, concentrating on familiar words, and guessing meaning when full comprehension was not possible. This alignment confirms that cognitive strategies constitute the core of students' listening behavior, especially when dealing with fast speech or unfamiliar accents.

Cognitive strategies were represented as the most frequently used strategies across all semester levels, though their intensity and sophistication differ. Quantitatively, first-semester students report high reliance on basic cognitive strategies, with approximately 65% agreeing that they frequently replay audio materials and focus on key words. However, their strong dependence on repetition suggests compensatory behavior rather than strategic processing, as reflected in persistent listening difficulties.

Third-semester students reported slightly higher agreement rates (around 70%) for cognitive strategy use, particularly in note-taking, inferencing, and selective attention. Fifth-semester students maintain similarly high usage (approximately 72%), but with stronger agreement on strategies involving summarizing content and identifying discourse markers. These patterns suggested qualitative shifts in how cognitive strategies were applied rather than simple increases in frequency.

FGD data revealed that first-semester students tend to process listening input word-by-word, often translating mentally into Indonesian. This bottom-up focus limits their ability to grasp overall meaning, especially in fast or authentic speech. Their cognitive strategy use is therefore intensive but inefficient.

In contrast, third and fifth-semester students reported using cognitive strategies more flexibly. Third-semester students described combining inferencing with note-taking, while fifth-semester students emphasized selective listening and summarization. These learners reported focusing on meaning rather than form, allowing them to maintain comprehension even when encountering unfamiliar expressions. Cognitive strategies are central to listening development at all levels; however, their effectiveness is closely tied to semester progression. As students

advance, cognitive strategies evolve from repetitive decoding tools into sophisticated meaning-construction mechanisms, supporting more fluent and confident listening comprehension.

*4.2.3. Compensation strategies used across semester levels*

The analysis showed that compensation strategies were used at a medium level, with a mean score of 3.22, which is the lowest among the direct strategies. The highest frequency occurs in the Neutral category (32.7%), indicating uncertainty or irregular use of strategies such as guessing meaning from context or using alternative expressions when comprehension breaks down. While 40.4% of students expressed agreement or strong agreement with using compensation strategies, a relatively high proportion (26.9%) reported disagreement. This pattern suggests that although some students actively compensate for gaps in linguistic knowledge, others may lack confidence in guessing or feel uncomfortable using such strategies, particularly in academic listening contexts.

**Table 4.2.3**

Students' responses to questions of compensation strategies.

| Likert Scale | Frequency (n) | Percentage | Valid Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 (Strongly Disagree) | 8 | 7.7% | 7.7% |
| 2 (Disagree) | 14 | 13.5% | 13.5% |
| 3 (Neutral) | 27 | 26.0% | 26.0% |
| 4 (Agree) | 28 | 26.9% | 26.9% |
| 5 (Strongly Agree) | 27 | 26.0% | 26.0% |
| Total | 104 | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| Mean = 3.22 (Medium Level) | | | |

Qualitative data revealed that guessing meaning is a common survival strategy, particularly in authentic listening contexts. However, FGD participants also acknowledged frequent reliance on translation into Indonesian, which may temporarily support comprehension but potentially hinder the development of automatic listening processing. This explains the medium quantitative trend observed.

Quantitative results showed that compensation strategies are medium used across semesters, with notable differences in purpose. Among first-semester students, approximately 60% agreed that they frequently guess meanings or rely on translation when comprehension fails. This high reliance reflects their limited linguistic resources and difficulty processing authentic speech.

Third-semester students reported slightly lower agreement (around 55%), while fifth-semester students show further reduction (approximately 48%). This declining trend suggests that compensation strategies become less central as students' listening proficiency improves, although they remain useful in challenging contexts.

Qualitative evidence indicated that first-semester students often resort to guessing or switching to Indonesian to fill gaps in vocabulary and phonological recognition. While these

strategies help maintain engagement, they also reinforce dependency on the first language, potentially slowing automatic listening development.

In the third and fifth semesters, students described using compensation strategies more selectively. Rather than translating entire segments, they reported guessing meaning based on context or ignoring non-essential details. Fifth-semester students emphasized strategic tolerance of ambiguity, allowing them to follow the overall message without full lexical understanding.

Thus, compensation strategies played a transitional role in listening comprehension. Their decreasing frequency across semesters corresponds with improved listening proficiency, indicating that as students gain confidence and competence, they rely less on compensatory mechanisms and more on direct comprehension strategies.

*4.2.4. Metacognitive strategies used across semester levels*

Metacognitive strategies showed one of the strongest patterns of use among all strategy categories, with a mean score of 3.50, indicating a medium-to-high level of strategic engagement. More than half of the respondents (52.9%) reported positive use of metacognitive strategies, as seen in the combined Agree (26.9%) and Strongly Agree (26.0%) responses. These findings suggest that many students consciously plan their listening, monitor their comprehension, and evaluate their performance after listening tasks. However, the presence of 26.0% Neutral responses implies that metacognitive awareness is not yet fully internalized by all learners, particularly those at lower semester levels. The relatively low percentage of negative responses (21.2%) reflects growing strategic maturity among the participants.

**Table 4.2.4**
Students' responses for questions of metacognitive strategies.

| Likert Scale | Frequency (n) | Percentage | Valid Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 (Strongly Disagree) | 8 | 7.7% | 7.7% |
| 2 (Disagree) | 14 | 13.5% | 13.5% |
| 3 (Neutral) | 27 | 26.0% | 26.0% |
| 4 (Agree) | 28 | 26.9% | 26.9% |
| 5 (Strongly Agree) | 27 | 26.0% | 26.0% |
| Total | 104 | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| Mean = 3.50 (Medium – High Level) | | | |

FGD findings revealed a developmental pattern behind these figures. Lower-semester students reported minimal planning or self-evaluation, whereas higher-semester students demonstrated greater awareness of strategy selection, goal-setting, and reflection. These qualitative insights explain why metacognitive strategies appear medium used overall despite being highly effective.

Quantitatively, metacognitive strategy use showed the clearest developmental progression. Only around 36% of first-semester students agreed that they plan, monitor, or evaluate their

listening, with nearly half selecting neutral responses. This suggests limited awareness of listening as a strategic process.

Third-semester students demonstrated medium growth, with approximately 47% agreeing that they engage in planning and self-monitoring. Fifth-semester students show the highest usage, with about 62% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they consciously regulate their listening processes before, during, and after tasks.

FGD findings have explained this pattern. First-semester students rarely reported preparing for listening tasks or reflecting on their performance afterward. Many viewed listening as a passive activity rather than a skill requiring conscious regulation. In contrast, third-semester students described predicting content and checking comprehension during pauses, while fifth-semester students emphasized goal-setting, strategy selection, and post-listening evaluation. These learners demonstrated strong awareness of their listening strengths and weaknesses.

Metacognitive strategies are closely associated with semester level and listening proficiency. Higher-level students' ability to regulate their listening processes contributes significantly to improved comprehension, confirming the importance of explicit metacognitive training in listening instruction.

*4.2.5. Affective strategies used across semester levels*

Affective strategies were employed at a medium level, with a mean score of 3.29. The largest proportion of students selected the Neutral option (30.8%), indicating a mixed or situational approach to using strategies related to managing anxiety, motivation, and emotional responses during listening activities. While 43.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they use affective strategies, a notable 25.9% expressed disagreement. This suggests that emotional regulation during listening remains a challenge for some learners, particularly those who experience anxiety when exposed to fast speech or unfamiliar accents. The findings imply that affective strategy instruction may not be sufficiently emphasized in listening courses.

**Table 4.2.5**

Students' responses for questions of affective strategies.

| Likert Scale | Frequency (n) | Percentage | Valid Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 (Strongly Disagree) | 10 | 9.6% | 9.6% |
| 2 (Disagree) | 17 | 16.3% | 16.3% |
| 3 (Neutral) | 32 | 30.8% | 30.8% |
| 4 (Agree) | 23 | 22.1% | 22.1% |
| 5 (Strongly Agree) | 22 | 21.2% | 21.2% |
| Total | 104 | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| Mean = 3.29 (Medium Level) | | | |

These indicate that anxiety is common, particularly when students encounter fast native-speaker speech or unfamiliar accents. Students reported calming themselves, increasing practice

frequency, or reminding themselves that improvement takes time. These practices align with the medium level of affective strategy use identified quantitatively.

*4.2.6. Social strategies used across semester levels*

Social strategies demonstrate a medium to high level of use, with a mean score of 3.37. Approximately 47.1% of students reported positive use of social strategies, including asking for clarification, discussing listening tasks with peers, and collaborating during learning activities. The Neutral responses (29.8%) indicate that a substantial number of students engage in social strategies only occasionally, possibly depending on task design or classroom environment. The relatively low level of negative responses (23.1%) suggests that most students recognize the value of interaction in improving listening comprehension, although opportunities for structured peer collaboration may still be limited.

**Table 4.2.6**

Students' responses to questions of social strategies.

| Likert Scale | Frequency (n) | Percentage | Valid Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 (Strongly Disagree) | 10 | 9.6% | 9.6% |
| 2 (Disagree) | 17 | 16.3% | 16.3% |
| 3 (Neutral) | 32 | 30.8% | 30.8% |
| 4 (Agree) | 23 | 22.1% | 22.1% |
| 5 (Strongly Agree) | 22 | 21.2% | 21.2% |
| Total | 104 | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| Mean = 3.37 (Medium – High Level) | | | |

Findings confirmed that peer discussion and collaborative listening activities play a supportive role. Responses from participants explained that discussing difficult listening passages with classmates helps clarify meaning and build confidence. Students in higher semesters also reported practicing listening through informal conversations, which contributes to more effective comprehension.

These findings indicate medium use of social strategies across all semesters, with gradual increases over time. Approximately 45% of first-semester students reported managing anxiety or seeking peer support, compared to 52% of third-semester students and 58% of fifth-semester students. These results suggest growing emotional regulation and collaborative engagement.

Lower-semester students often experience listening anxiety but lack effective coping mechanisms. They tend to work individually and avoid interaction due to fear of misunderstanding or making errors. Third and fifth semester students, however, reported actively discussing listening tasks with peers, asking for clarification, and practicing listening through interaction. Fifth-semester students emphasized confidence through repeated social exposure, including informal conversations and collaborative learning.

Overall, social strategies support listening development by reducing anxiety and increasing meaningful exposure. Their increased use at higher semester levels reflects students'

growing confidence and communicative competence, reinforcing the reciprocal relationship between listening ability and strategic social engagement.

*4.2.7. Students' experiences in listening comprehension through focus group discussions*

This study was designed with open-ended questions in Focus Group Discussions (FGD). It is critical for gathering in-depth insights and comprehending participants' perspectives. Open-ended questions allow respondents to freely express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in their own words.

In the first question on focus group discussions, many students also reported listening to music or podcasts, practicing shadowing and repeated listening, engaging in conversational practice with peers or native speakers, and strengthening their vocabulary through the use of dictionaries or targeted vocabulary-learning exercises. Student A1 stated that: "I usually watch English movies or series without subtitles. When there are difficult parts, I replay them and try to imitate the pronunciation. I also listen to short podcasts every night before I sleep". Those representative responses explained that the student intentionally watched English films without subtitles and practiced shadowing short dialogues to internalize pronunciation, rhythm, and sentence stress, demonstrating a conscious effort to enhance both comprehension and production.

Responses to the second question, which focused on the reasons behind those chosen efforts, indicated that students preferred activities they found enjoyable, sustainable, and easy to integrate into their daily routines. Many perceived these methods as effective because audio-visual content provides contextual clues that support comprehension, while also maintaining engagement and motivation. Student A17 stated that: "I chose movies and podcasts because they are interesting and not boring. Movies also give visual context, so it's easier for me to guess the meaning of expressions that I don't fully understand". Students prefer films or podcasts because these resources are enjoyable and easy to access, reflecting Deci and Ryan's (2000) perspective that intrinsically motivating activities sustain engagement and support long-term language development. As one participant stated, which films and podcasts offer helpful contextual information and visual support, making meaning easier to infer while keeping the learning process enjoyable.

The third question explored students' experiences with teaching methods and the ease with which they could follow listening lectures. Students' comments about structured guidance and the need for authentic materials reflect the pedagogical framework suggested by Vandergrift and Goh (2012), who emphasize scaffolded listening tasks to support comprehension. Participants' responses suggested considerable variation in teaching approaches. Student B5 stated that "In my opinion, the listening class is helpful, especially when the lecturer explains the key vocabulary before playing the audio. But sometimes the listening materials feel too long and not very relevant to daily conversations". Some students praised lecturers who provided clear, structured explanations and guided listening tasks step-by-step. Other difficulties occurred when instructors relied heavily on outdated recordings or spoke too quickly, making comprehension more challenging. Many participants emphasized a need for more authentic materials and better

materials during listening activities. A student among them noted that their lecturer delivered explanations clearly, but they would still appreciate more opportunities to practice with contemporary and better audio materials.

Following the fourth question, which examined students' ability to understand native speakers, several students acknowledged experiencing substantial difficulty, particularly when encountering fast speech or unfamiliar accents. Students' difficulty with fast-accented native speaker audio is consistent with Field's (2008) explanation that natural speech contains reduced forms and rapid delivery, which significantly increase processing load for EFL learners. Student B13 stated that: "Yes, I usually have trouble when the speaker uses a British or Australian accent. I'm more familiar with the American accent, so when I hear different accents, I need to replay the audio several times". Participants reported it was necessary for learners to listen repeatedly in order to grasp meaning, and many struggled with slang or informal registers commonly used in spontaneous native interactions. A few students expressed that they could generally follow slower or scripted speech, but spontaneous native conversations, especially those containing unfamiliar accents, often required multiple repetitions to fully understand.

The final open-ended question asked students for suggestions to make listening activities effective. Students' suggestions for authentic materials, diverse accents, and scaffolded activities align with Vandergrift's (2007) recommendation that listening instruction should combine metacognitive strategy training with rich exposure to real situations. Several participants recommended increasing exposure to authentic audio featuring a variety of accents, incorporating shadowing and role-play into classroom practice, and providing pre-listening vocabulary or guided support to orient learners before tackling the main listening tasks. Others highlighted the importance of material listening instruction, including structured pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening activities. One of the representative responses suggested that teachers introduce diverse authentic audio materials and include pre-listening vocabulary activities so that students can focus more effectively on key language features during listening tasks. Student B2 stated that: "The lecturer should provide more real-life audio instead of only textbook recordings. It would also help if we had pre-listening activities, like discussing the key vocabulary first". Regarding native speaker audio, most students reported consistent difficulty, especially in overcoming rapid speech, slang, and unfamiliar accents, although many could grasp the general meaning after several repetitions. Suggestions for improving listening classes consistently emphasized the need for authentic materials with diverse accents, more regular listening practice both inside and outside the classroom, greater use of interactive activities such as shadowing and role-play, and explicit vocabulary teaching and pre-listening strategy instruction. Students expressed a strong desire for learning experiences that are not only authentic but also pedagogically structured.

Across all strategy categories used, the findings demonstrate a systematic progression from lower to higher semester levels, where students' listening comprehension moves from basic, reactive strategies toward integrated, metacognitive, and self-regulated listening behavior. This progression confirms that listening comprehension is a developmental skill shaped by experience, strategic awareness, and instructional support. The findings indicate that students

employ a wide range of listening strategies consistent with Oxford's (1990) SILL framework. Cognitive strategies show the highest level of use (approximately 68%), followed by social (53%) and compensation strategies (57%), while memory, metacognitive, and affective strategies remain at medium levels (approximately 44 - 49%). The integration of quantitative percentages and qualitative evidence demonstrates that strategy use becomes more varied, deliberate, and self-regulated as students advance academically. These results underscore the need for explicit strategy instruction and scaffolded listening tasks to enhance students' strategic awareness and listening autonomy.

Overall, the findings reveal that students encounter medium listening difficulties, predominantly related to accent variation and sentence complexity. To cope with these challenges, they rely heavily on cognitive and social strategies, often through self-initiated media-based learning and collaborative practice. Their efforts are driven by motivation and sustained exposure rather than by difficulty levels, as reflected in the lack of a significant statistical relationship between perceived difficulty and strategy use. Finally, students expressed a clear need for more authentic materials and interactive learning opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of their listening strategies.

## 5. Discussion

This section discusses the research findings by interpreting the quantitative questionnaire data and qualitative Focus Group Discussion (FGD) data in relation to relevant theoretical frameworks and previous studies. The discussion is organized around the two main objectives of the study: (1) students' difficulties in listening comprehension and (2) the strategies students employ to overcome those difficulties.

Among all difficulty indicators, accent variation and speech rate emerged as the most prominent obstacles. Quantitative data revealed a mean score of 3.08 for accent and intonation, indicating medium difficulty, while qualitative FGD responses further demonstrated students' struggles in segmenting rapid speech and recognizing reduced forms. This finding corroborates Vandergrift and Goh's (2012) argument that phonological variation places a heavy cognitive burden on EFL learners, especially those with limited exposure to native English speakers. The students' reliance on repeated listening reflects compensatory behavior rather than fluent decoding ability. Lexical limitations, particularly found in understanding idiomatic expressions and unfamiliar vocabulary, also contributed significantly to listening difficulty. As shown in both questionnaire results and FGD data, students often focused excessively on unknown words, causing them to miss subsequent information. This supports Field's (2008) claim that lexical gaps disrupt real-time processing and interfere with global comprehension. The tendency to translate word-for-word, frequently mentioned in the FGDs, further indicates underdeveloped top-down listening skills. Difficulties related to syntactic processing were reported at a medium level (M = 3.05), suggesting that students struggle to integrate complex grammatical structures during listening. Students' comments about forgetting the beginning of long sentences reflect limitations in working memory capacity, as proposed by Vandergrift (2007). These findings

align with Cross (2012), who noted that syntactic complexity often overloads learners' cognitive resources during real-time listening.

At the discourse level, students demonstrated difficulty identifying key information and maintaining coherence in longer listening texts. The tendency to focus on understanding every word, rather than extracting main ideas, suggests an overreliance on bottom-up processing. This confirms Goh's (2000) observation that ineffective listeners often lack selective attention skills and fail to prioritize essential information. Listener-related factors such as anxiety, concentration loss, and fatigue further exacerbated listening difficulties. Students' reports of nervousness during listening tests and difficulty sustaining attention during long audio recordings support Vandergrift's (2007) view that affective variables significantly influence listening performance. These affective constraints highlight the importance of addressing emotional regulation alongside linguistic competence in listening instruction.

The second objective examined the strategies students use to cope with listening difficulties based on Oxford's (1990) SILL framework. Overall, the findings reveal that students employ a range of direct and indirect strategies, with varying degrees of frequency and sophistication across semester levels.

Cognitive strategies emerged as the most frequently used strategies, with approximately 68% of respondents reporting regular use. Activities such as replaying audio, focusing on keywords, inferencing, and note-taking were commonly reported in both questionnaire and FGD data. This finding is consistent with Oxford (1990), who emphasized that cognitive strategies form the core of language processing activities. However, qualitative evidence suggests that lower-semester students rely heavily on repetition and translation, indicating that strategy use is often reactive rather than strategic.

Memory strategies were employed at a medium level, with students using techniques such as vocabulary grouping and reviewing listening materials after class. The moderate usage suggests partial awareness of the importance of retention strategies but insufficient systematic application. As Oxford (1990) stated, memory strategies are most effective when used deliberately and consistently, and conditions that appear to develop gradually as students progress academically.

Compensation strategies were utilized to a moderate extent, particularly among lower-semester students who frequently resorted to guessing meanings or switching to Indonesian when they encountered difficulties in comprehension. Although these strategies can help sustain engagement, an excessive dependence on translation may hinder the development of automatic listening skills. The noticeable decrease in the use of compensation strategies among students in higher semesters suggests an enhancement in linguistic competence and a greater tolerance for ambiguity, as noted by Vandergrift (2007).

Among the indirect strategies, metacognitive strategies exhibited a clear developmental progression. Students in higher semesters demonstrated a greater ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate their listening performance. This observation aligns with Vandergrift and Goh's (2012) assertion that metacognitive awareness is a hallmark of successful listeners. The medium-to-

high mean score of 3.50 suggests that many students are starting to perceive listening as an active and self-regulated process.

Conversely, affective strategies were employed at a medium level, highlighting students' efforts to manage anxiety and sustain motivation. While some students reported successful self-encouragement and emotional regulation, others faced challenges with anxiety during listening tasks. This indicates that training in affective strategies continues to be underemphasized in listening instruction, despite its critical role in alleviating listening-related stress (Oxford, 1990).

Ultimately, social strategies demonstrated a medium frequency of use, with heightened engagement among students in higher semesters. Participants noted that peer discussions, seeking clarification, and collaborative practice were beneficial in enhancing both comprehension and confidence. These findings align with Vygotskian perspectives on the role of social interaction in facilitating language development and support Oxford's (1990) assertion that social strategies boost both understanding and motivation.

A significant finding of this study is the developmental relationship among semester level, listening proficiency, and strategy use. As students advance through the program, their listening challenges transition from fundamental phonological and lexical issues to more complex discourse comprehension difficulties. At the same time, the strategies they employ change from simple, reactive methods to more complex, self-regulated, and metacognitive ones.

Interestingly, the findings indicate no strong direct correlation between perceived listening difficulty and overall strategy use, suggesting that factors such as motivation, exposure, and strategic awareness mediate this relationship. This supports previous research indicating that successful listening development depends not only on difficulty level but also on learners' ability to select and regulate appropriate strategies (Goh, 2000; Vandergrift, 2007).

## 6. Conclusion

The findings indicate that students typically encounter a medium level of difficulty in listening, particularly regarding accent variation, rapid speech, complex sentence structures, and understanding native speakers. These challenges align with Vandergrift's (2007) model of listening comprehension, which highlights the interplay between bottom-up decoding processes and top-down interpretive skills. Lower-semester students often struggle with phonological and lexical decoding, whereas higher-semester students tend to face difficulties at the discourse and pragmatic levels, including idiomatic expressions and spontaneous speech.

In terms of strategy use, the results demonstrate that students employ a range of direct and indirect strategies, as categorized by Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). Cognitive strategies were the most frequently used, followed by compensation and social strategies, while memory, metacognitive, and affective strategies were employed at medium levels. Importantly, strategy use shows a clear developmental pattern across semester levels. Early-semester students rely heavily on basic cognitive and compensation strategies, whereas advanced students demonstrate greater metacognitive awareness, self-regulation, and strategic integration.

The qualitative findings further emphasize that students' efforts to enhance their listening comprehension are primarily driven by autonomous learning practices. These include exposure to English audio-visual media, shadowing techniques, vocabulary development, and peer interaction. However, the lack of a strong statistical correlation between perceived listening difficulty and strategy use indicates that the adoption of strategies is influenced by additional factors, such as motivation, learning habits, and access to authentic input. Overall, the findings confirm that listening comprehension is a developmental and strategic process that necessitates continual exposure, guided instruction, and increasing learner autonomy.

**Declaration on the use of AI**

The authors employed AI-assisted tools, including ChatGPT, Grammarly, and DeepSeek solely for the purpose of refining the academic register and linguistic clarity of this work. All ideas, substantive content, and intellectual reasoning remain the original work of the authors, who bear full academic responsibility for the manuscript.

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