

# **EFL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF TED TALKS AS AUTHENTIC MATERIALS FOR LISTENING COMPREHENSION: A QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTIVE STUDY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to explore university students' perceptions of using TED Talks as a learning medium to improve their listening comprehension. Therefore, this study also investigates whether TED Talks are effective for students and whether TED Talks provide benefits or challenges for them. This study involved twenty undergraduate students in their third-year of the English Education Study Program at Universitas Negeri Semarang, with three students selected for interview. This research employed a descriptive method using a descriptive qualitative approach. The data in this study were collected through questionnaires and interviews. The findings show that students generally consider TED Talks useful and effective for their listening comprehension and vocabulary. Participants also reported that TED Talks motivated them to learn listening comprehension. However, several challenges emerged, including difficulty watching without subtitles and unfamiliar words. These challenges often hindered students' ability to understand the overall message, particularly for students with lower proficiency levels. The limitations of this study include the scope of the theory which only studies the listening comprehension area and limited approaches to listening learning to the use of TED Talks as a learning medium. In addition, this study was conducted with a limited yet focused participant group. Therefore, future researchers are suggested to expand the scope of relevant listening learning theories and include more participants to broaden the area of study.

Keywords: TED Talks, Listening Comprehension, Perceptions, Benefits, Challenges

## **INTRODUCTION**

Over recent years, listening has been increasingly recognized as a core component of English language learning, particularly for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Listening as a foundational skill that supports the development of other language abilities (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). In EFL contexts, listening comprehension is especially important because learners are expected to process more sophisticated spoken input, such as academic lectures and authentic communicative interactions. As a results, understanding spoken language plays an essential role in learning and using a second language, which is needed for real classroom learning activities (Ahmadi, 2016) Despite its central importance, listening is widely regarded as one of the most challenging skills for EFL learners to master. This

difficulty stems from the complex nature of listening, which requires learners to decode sounds, recognize vocabulary, and construct meaning simultaneously and in real time. In addition, university learners facing difficulties with listening due to the features of spoken language that affect their listening ability (Nguyen, 2020).

Consequently, learners often concentrate excessively on understanding individual words, which can disrupt their ability to grasp the overall meaning when confronted with unfamiliar expressions or fast-paced speech. In addition, linguistic features such as pronunciation variation, connected speech, and diverse accents further complicate the listening process. This issue is particularly evident in EFL settings, where classroom listening materials are often simplified and delivered at a slower pace compared to real-world communication. These observations are consistent with the findings of (Nadhira & Warni, 2021), who identify unfamiliar vocabulary, rapid speech rate, accent variation, unclear pronunciation, and limited learning facilities as major barriers to effective listening comprehension.

Recent international studies further reinforce the importance of authentic exposure in listening instruction. With the help of authentic materials, this can place learners in a context that is closely related to their real lives (Alamri, 2025). Authentic input encourages learners to focus on key ideas rather than isolated words, which supports more effective real-time processing of spoken language. However, such materials need to be carefully scaffolded to prevent cognitive overload, particularly for lower-proficiency learners. By developing awareness of how listening works and how meaning can be constructed from partial understanding, learners become more confident and strategic listeners, even when exposed to unfamiliar accents or rapid speech. In the Indonesian EFL context, learners' educational backgrounds and limited opportunities to practice listening beyond the classroom further contribute to persistent listening difficulties. Therefore, these findings underline the necessity of integrating technology-enhanced and authentic listening materials to increase learners' exposure to real spoken English and support the development of effective listening comprehension skills.

Therefore, learning listening comprehension through authentic resources can provide supporting academic English listening tools for learners, serving as an alternative in the classroom. The utilizing video resources in EFL classrooms has both benefits and challenges (Kim, 2015). However, most researchers agree that videos are ultimately effective for developing or improving students' listening skills and stimulating the learning process. The ability of videos to increase student interest and motivation, as well as improve listening skills, is almost undeniable. In addition, more ways to get more accurate insight into students' listening skills, abilities, and confidence in EFL students include providing tools and multimedia, such as the YouTube app, which can serve as a reference for studying English. YouTube has become an incredible tool for education, both for students and teachers. Using YouTube is very beneficial because it provides various contents to watch or learn from, including educational materials and language-learning resources that can be used in listening classes for EFL students. By utilizing YouTube in the EFL classroom not only supports the development of students' speaking skills but enhances their overall fluency and coherence too.

One of the most widely used forms of authentic audiovisual material in language learning on YouTube is the TED Talks channel. TED is a nonprofit organization created to provide knowledge and ideas, particularly through brief but valuable talks (Tira Nur Fitria, 2022). Along with the topic matter, in listening, EFL learners will benefit significantly from the TED short speeches' engaged development of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation (Tira Nur Fitria, 2022). TED Talks present a wide variety of academic and non-academic topics, where presentations are delivered in authentic spoken English, reflecting real-life communication purposes, making them a potentially valuable learning resource for listening comprehension to EFL students. TED Talks could be a good tool used as a learning media for listening comprehension in the classroom. The TED Talks YouTube channel can help EFL students to develop their listening skills. This study also concludes that utilizing TED Talks in EFL classrooms in Indonesia can yield beneficial outcomes for EFL learners (Tilwani et al., 2022).

Based on the findings of Novia et al., (2023), their research demonstrated a statistically significant difference in learning outcomes between students who were instructed through TED Talks and those who experienced conventional teaching methods. The integration of TED Talks contributed positively to learners' vocabulary development, listening comprehension, and learning motivation. One contributing factor was the opportunity for students to choose topics aligned with their individual interests, which increased engagement and sustained attention. Through exposure to authentic audiovisual content provided by TED-Ed, learners encountered naturally occurring spoken English while simultaneously engaging with meaningful real-world themes. This exposure encouraged deeper cognitive processing and fostered critical thinking skills alongside listening development. Authentic videos are effective in the development of listening comprehension (POLAT & ERİŞTİ, 2022). Regular interaction with such materials allows learners to become more familiar with real communicative situations that are often underrepresented in traditional listening textbooks. As a result, learners gradually develop more efficient strategies for processing spoken input and extracting meaning under real-time conditions. In addition, the multimodal characteristics of TED Talks, combining spoken language with visual elements such as facial expressions, gestures, images, and contextual cues play a crucial role in supporting comprehension.

More recent studies further support the pedagogical value of TED Talks in EFL instruction. Systematic exposure to TED Talk videos leads to noticeable improvements in learners' listening and speaking abilities, as well as broader gains in general knowledge (Humenuk et al., 2021). Their pre-and post-test analysis confirmed that authentic video input contributes significantly to learners' overall language performance. On the other hand, (Al-Jarf, 2021) state that the use of TED Talks in EFL classrooms provide several themes in the real-life, speakers, motivation and inspiration. Learners exposed to such materials demonstrated higher levels of attention, improved understanding of spoken discourse, and greater confidence when dealing with authentic listening tasks. Furthermore, recent research highlights technology is an important facilitator that provides access to authentic language input and interactive learning. This has a positive impact on language learning abilities and improves listening skill (Nguyen et al., 2024).

When students engage with videos such as TED Talks, they are more likely to regulate their learning process by replaying content, focusing on key ideas, and making connections between visual and auditory input. This active engagement strengthens comprehension and supports long-term listening development. Therefore, incorporating TED Talks into EFL classrooms can be regarded as an effective instructional approach for improving listening skills. By offering authentic, engaging, and cognitively rich content, TED Talks not only enhance learners' exposure to real spoken English but also promote motivation, strategic listening, and deeper comprehension.

The use of TED Talks offers a wide range of advantages for students learning English, particularly in the development of listening skills, as it provides exposure to authentic language use, a variety of English accents, and naturally occurring speech patterns (Nurhidayat & Syarifah, 2019.) who state that TED Talks function as effective instructional resources in EFL contexts because their content is engaging and closely reflects real-life communication. Since TED Talks feature speakers from diverse cultural, academic, and professional backgrounds, learners are introduced to multiple global varieties of English. Such exposure supports learners' awareness of English as an international language and helps them adapt to different pronunciation styles and discourse patterns encountered in real communicative situations. In addition to linguistic benefits, TED Talks play an important role in enhancing learners' motivation and engagement. By presenting real-world ideas, social issues, and innovative perspectives, TED Talks encourage learners to engage actively with the content, which fosters intrinsic motivation and promotes deeper involvement in the learning process.

Video authentic material like TED Talks has an effect that is close to real-life language, thereby generating interest in learning and improving their understanding of English (El Haj Hassan et al., 2018). Moreover, the audiovisual characteristics of TED Talks contribute substantially to improved listening comprehension. (Ahluwalia, 2018) concludes that TED Talks can serve as a platform for designing enjoyable and engaging language-learning materials, while (Tilwani et al., 2022) report that TED Talks positively influence learners' enthusiasm toward learning English. In addition, (Nurhidayat, 2023) find that the sociocultural themes embedded in TED Talks increase students' motivation and encourage more active participation during classroom activities. Likewise, (Yén & Phụng, 2022) demonstrate that regular exposure to TED Talks contributes to improvements in listening comprehension, vocabulary development, pronunciation, presentation skills, and overall learning motivation, largely due to the accessibility and appealing nature of the content.

Consequently, learners benefit from TED Talks not only in terms of listening comprehension but also in the development of pronunciation accuracy, fluency, accent awareness, idea delivery, and critical thinking skills. These advantages help learners overcome difficulties in understanding diverse English speech, including that produced by non-native speakers (Choirunnisa & Sari, 2021). Overall, the integration of TED Talks into EFL instruction represents an effective and motivating approach to listening development by offering authentic, meaningful, and learner-centered learning materials.

In addition, EFL learners frequently face a range of difficulties in learning English, particularly in developing listening comprehension skills. These challenges tend to become

more noticeable when students are introduced to authentic materials such as the TED Talks YouTube channel, as many learners have limited exposure to naturally occurring spoken English beyond the classroom environment. Learners often struggle to cope with diverse accents, fast speech rates, connected pronunciation, and unfamiliar lexical items, all of which can hinder comprehension and negatively influence overall language development. (Astika & Kurniawan, 2020) report that difficulties related to understanding unfamiliar accents, pronunciation, and intonation are common among students and often lead to reduced confidence and weaker listening performance. Such difficulties can also be explained from a cognitive perspective. Listening to a second language (L2) involves complex cognitive processes, in which learners must simultaneously decode speech, recognize words, and construct meaning, which can place a significant cognitive load on second language listeners (Goh, 2023).

When learners lack adequate exposure to authentic spoken input, they tend to struggle with adapting to variations in pronunciation and speech style, which further complicates comprehension. As a consequence, learners may become overly dependent on subtitles or direct translation instead of developing effective listening strategies that support independent comprehension. Nevertheless, consistent exposure to varied and authentic listening input has been shown to gradually alleviate these challenges. Furthermore, The use of authentic audio-visual materials plays an important role in improving listening comprehension skills, especially by immersing them in the use of natural language, diverse accents, and spontaneous speech patterns (Izzati Mohd Amin Azhari & Hashim, 2025). Through this exposure, learners can develop greater listening flexibility and resilience, which are essential for understanding spoken English across different communicative situations.

More recent research supports this view, demonstrating that Authentic listening materials are interesting and help them understand real-world conversations, thereby contributing to improved listening skills (Nuralisa et al., 2025). In this context, TED Talks represent a valuable resource for providing learners with rich and varied real-life listening experiences. By repeatedly engaging with speakers from diverse linguistic, cultural, and professional backgrounds, students are given opportunities to adapt to different speech patterns and communicative styles. (Wu, 2020) found that most learners perceived noticeable improvements in their listening comprehension after participating in learning activities that incorporated TED Talks. In addition, TED Talks are also believed to be supplementary material that can improve listening skills by motivating them to learn independently (Fadya et al., 2024). Therefore, although learners may initially experience difficulties when exposed to authentic listening materials, the integration of TED Talks into EFL instruction can support gradual improvement in listening proficiency. Increased exposure, growing familiarity with natural speech, and enhanced learner confidence collectively contribute to more effective processing of spoken English in diverse communicative contexts.

Despite the growing body of research highlighting the effectiveness of TED Talks as an authentic listening resource, most previous studies have predominantly focused on measuring learning outcomes through experimental designs, such as pre-test and post-test

results. Limited attention has been given to exploring learners' perceptions, particularly within the Indonesian EFL higher education context. Understanding students' perceptions is essential, as learners' attitudes, motivation, and perceived challenges play a crucial role in determining the successful integration of instructional media in the classroom. This study is significant as it addresses this research gap by examining EFL students' perceptions at

Universitas Negeri Semarang regarding the use of TED Talks as a listening learning medium. Therefore, this research investigates students' perceptions toward TED Talks' relevancy and effectiveness for the benefits and the challenging with the three following questions: (1) How do Universitas Negeri Semarang EFL students perceive the effects of using TED Talks on their listening comprehension?, (2) What benefits do Universitas Negeri Semarang EFL students experience in their listening comprehension through the use of TED Talks? and (3) What challenges do Universitas Negeri Semarang EFL students experience while learning their listening comprehension when using TED Talks?. The findings of this research are expected to provide valuable pedagogical insights for English lecturers in selecting appropriate authentic materials, and support the integration of digital and authentic resources in EFL classrooms.

## METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore students' perceptions of using TED Talks as a learning medium for listening comprehension. A descriptive qualitative approach was chosen because the primary objective of the study was to provide a clear and straightforward description of students' experiences, attitudes, and perceived challenges without focusing on statistical hypothesis testing. According to (Sandelowski, 2000) state that qualitative descriptive research is appropriate when researchers aim to present participants' views in everyday language and describe a phenomenon as experienced by individuals.

The participants of this study were twenty undergraduate students from the English Education Study Program at Universitas Negeri Semarang who had experience using TED Talks videos on YouTube in listening courses. The participants were selected using purposive sampling, with the following criteria: (1) students were enrolled in an English listening course, (2) students had used TED Talks as part of their listening practice, and (3) students were willing to participate voluntarily in the study.

All twenty participants completed the questionnaire. From this group, three students were selected for interviews based on (1) their active use of TED Talks for listening practice, (2) variation in questionnaire responses (high, moderate, and mixed perceptions), and (3) their willingness to provide more detailed explanations of their experiences. This selection aimed to obtain rich and representative qualitative data.

This study employed two instruments: a questionnaire and interviews. The questionnaire consisted of 20 closed-ended questions measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The items were developed based on relevant literature on listening comprehension and technology-assisted language learning. The questionnaire measured five main aspects:

1. perceptions of effectiveness of TED Talks for listening comprehension,

2. improvement of listening understanding,
3. motivation and engagement,
4. vocabulary development, and
5. perceived difficulties and challenges in understanding TED Talks (such as accent, pronunciation, and vocabulary).

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire items were adapted from previous studies and aligned with the research objectives. Prior to data analysis, the reliability of the questionnaire was examined using Cronbach's Alpha. The result indicated that the questionnaire had acceptable internal consistency, with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient above the minimum acceptable value of 0.70, indicating that the instrument was reliable for measuring students' perceptions.

The interview instrument consisted of 10 open-ended questions designed to explore students' experiences in greater depth. The interview questions focused on listening improvement, the benefits such as motivation, vocabulary acquisition, and difficulties encountered when watching TED Talks, and overall impressions of using TED Talks as a listening learning resource. The semi-structured format allowed flexibility for participants to elaborate on their responses.

The questionnaire was distributed online through Google Forms, allowing participants to respond efficiently and ensuring automatic data recording. After the questionnaire data were collected, interviews were conducted with the selected participants via WhatsApp chat, as this platform provided a comfortable and accessible environment for students to express their ideas freely. All interview responses were documented and transcribed for analysis.

The data analysis followed a descriptive and thematic analytical framework. Questionnaire data were analyzed descriptively by examining response patterns, mean scores, and frequencies to identify general trends in students' perceptions. Although numerical values were used, the analysis focused on describing tendencies rather than making statistical generalizations.

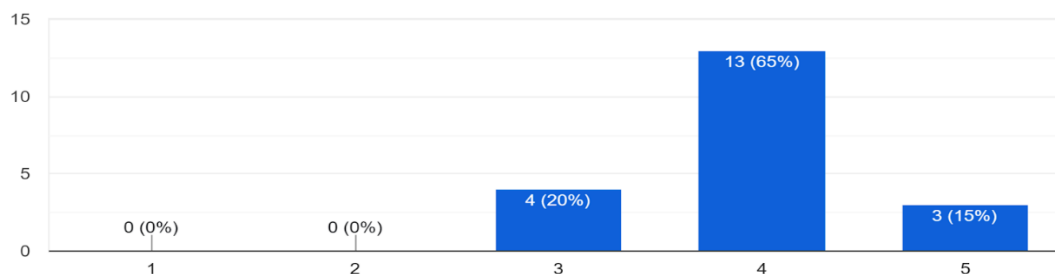
Interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the steps of data familiarization, coding, theme identification, and interpretation. Recurring themes related to listening improvement, motivation, vocabulary development, and learning challenges were identified and compared with the questionnaire findings.

## **RESULTS**

The findings of this study were analyzed through questionnaires and interviews, showing the results of how students perceived the effectiveness of using TED Talks, the benefits participants gained from using TED Talks, and the challenges faced in using TED Talks as a platform for listening comprehension. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the researchers analysed the questionnaire and interview data, which led to three main themes discussed in the following sections.

### *Students Perceive the Effectiveness of Using TED Talks on Listening Comprehension*

1. I feel that my listening skills improve more when I use TED Talks than when I use other platforms.  
20 responses



*Figure 1. Students perceive the effectiveness of TED Talks*

This study found that students generally perceive the effectiveness of using the TED Talks as a valuable tool for their learning listening comprehension. This is shown in the statement in Figure 1.1. “I feel that my listening skills improve more when I watch TED Talks than on other platforms”, as shown in the figure above. The highest percentage shows that 65% of participants chose the 4-point Likert scale, meaning 13 of 20 participants agreed that TED Talks can improve their listening comprehension compared to other platforms. Furthermore, these findings are supported by the interviews presented below:

“The speakers are clear and well-prepared. The topics are interesting, so it’s easier to stay focused.” (Student 1)

“The speakers are real, the topics are varied and interesting, and it sounds natural.” (Student 2)

“It stands out because of its high-quality, diverse content and clear, structured language”. (Student 3)

These responses show that students perceive TED Talks positively; they indicate that TED Talks influence improving their listening comprehension which affects students’ perceptions of their effectiveness.

#### ***Benefits of Using TED Talks for Listening Comprehension***

The findings indicate most students agreed that TED Talks offer many benefits, suggesting that TED Talks help students understand main ideas, maintain a steady pace, and note important details. This is shown by the questionnaire below, which indicates the result.

2. I have improved my listening comprehension after learning the TED Talks Videos.  
20 responses

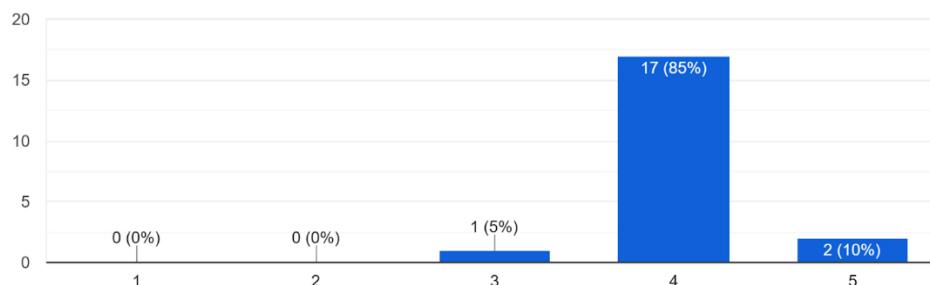


Figure 2. Benefits of TED Talks for listening comprehension

The findings show that students receive positive perceptions of using TED Talks on students' listening comprehension, as most students reported that their listening improved when using TED Talks as learning tools. The findings also showed that students did not chose the lowest scale (1) and (2) which means that none of the students felt that TED Talks had no impact on them. As a result, the findings indicated that TED Talks have a significant impact on improving their listening comprehension. Besides, this finding is also supported by the interview.

"The contents of the video are engaging, and the video doesn't feel boring." (Student 1)

"I have improved my listening comprehension by watching with the subtitles, and I also tried to take notes of the difficult or important parts". (Student 2)

"I've improved my listening comprehension through practising and focusing on identifying the main points and supporting details". (Student 3)

6. I learn new vocabulary through watching TED Talks.  
20 responses

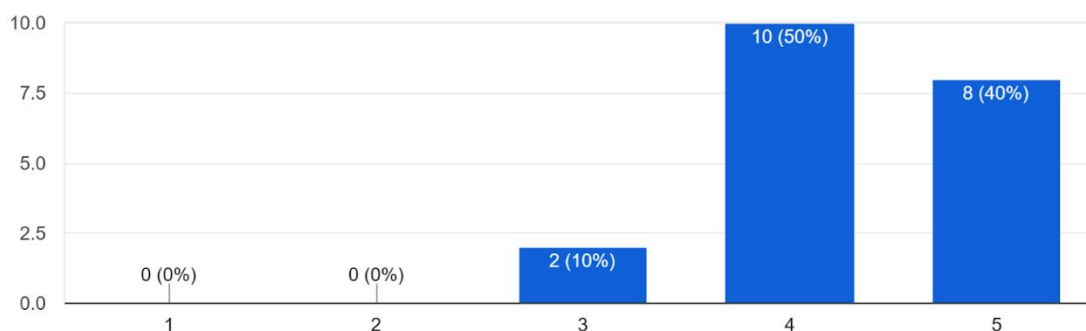


Figure 3. Vocabulary as a benefits of using TED Talks

Based on the figure above shows that most participants chose the Likert scale on 4 and 5. This indicates that watching TED Talks help students in enriching their vocabulary. The findings indicates that no participants chose the scale 1 and scale 2 suggesting that students perceived benefits from using TED Talks as their authentic materials. Based on participants' responses, it is concluded that TED Talks are effective for students in acquire new vocabulary that might facilitate students' understanding on their listening comprehension.

7. TED Talks increase my motivation to learn listening skills.

20 responses

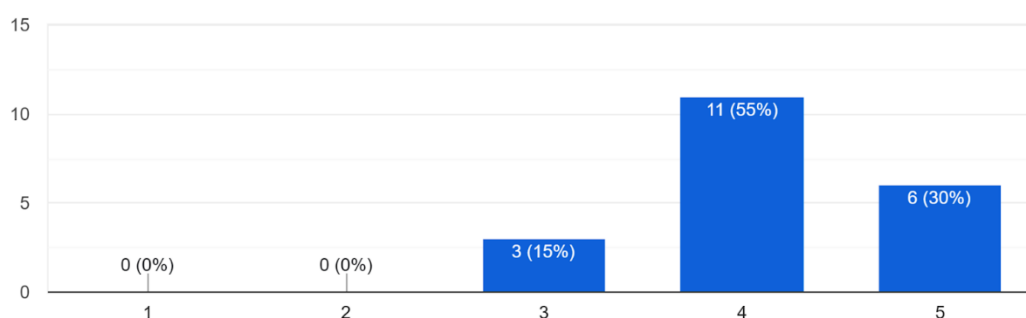


Figure 4. Motivation as benefits of using TED Talks

The findings shows that TED Talks play a significant impact on their learning motivation. The students chose on a 4 Likert scale, representing 55% and 6 participants chose on a 5 Likert scale, representing 30% which suggest that students received positive impact towards students' motivation. In conclusion, most participants agree that TED Talks can increase their motivation to learn listening comprehension. The results from student interviews support the results of this questionnaire:

“I am motivated by TED Talks because the topics are interesting, so I become motivated.” (Student 1)

“I feel more motivated because TED Talks inspire me and the content is enjoyable to watch.” (Student 2)

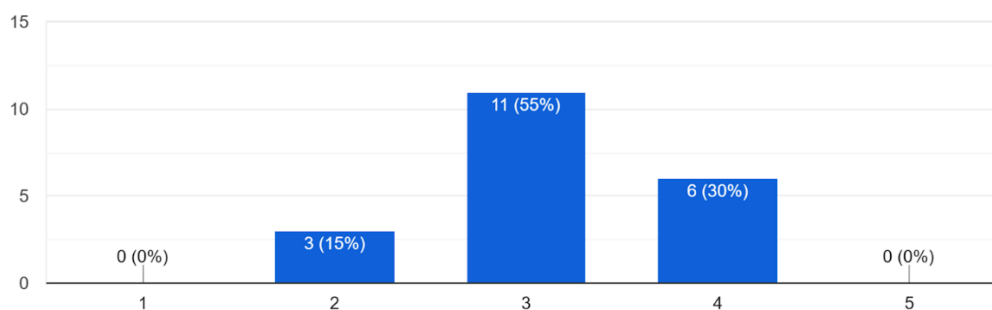
“TED Talks videos are informative and relevant to my personal interests, so I feel motivated and want to learn about acquiring valuable knowledge”. (Student 3)

It is concluded that TED Talks positively impact students and are beneficial for them. It also shows that students who were experienced in using TED Talks for their listening skills benefit from them, such as learning new vocabulary and being motivated to improve their listening comprehension further.

***Challenges of Using TED Talks for Listening Comprehension***

Despite the benefits of TED Talks, some students also find it challenging to use them as a listening tool, as shown in the figure below.

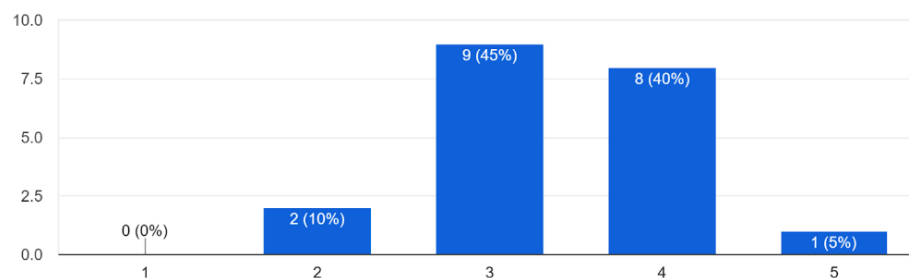
15. I find it difficult to understand TED Talks videos without any subtitles.  
20 responses



*Figure 5. Challenges of TED Talks videos without subtitles*

The results show that most students chose a scale 3, indicating that understanding TED Talks videos without subtitles presents a moderate challenge for some students. The findings also show that students chose level 4, indicating that watching TED Talks without subtitles made it difficult for them to understand the videos. In addition, no students chose scale 5, showed that some students were still able to understand the TED Talks videos without using subtitles. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers implement a gradual approach, by initially using English subtitles and gradually reducing their use. This strategy can help students develop greater listening proficiency and confidence.

20. I often encounter unfamiliar vocabulary that make it difficult to understand the content of TED Talks, which affect my listening comprehension.  
20 responses



*Figure 6. Challenges of unfamiliar vocabulary*

Based on the image above, the results of the study show that students tend to chose the neutral option, which means that they often encounter unfamiliar vocabulary and this can affect their listening comprehension. In conclusion, students still need to learn vocabulary before practicing listening, and teachers can support the scaffolding process to help them better understand new vocabulary.

“Unfamiliar vocabulary makes me miss the words sometimes, and it confuses me”.  
(Student 1)

“It’s difficult for me to hear the words, so that I mishear them with different meanings”.  
(Student 2)

“Unfamiliar words can change the meanings of the words that make me not recognise the words”. (Student 3)

This means some participants still felt challenged when listening to TED Talk videos as their learning tools.

## **DISCUSSION**

Based on the findings of this study, most participants demonstrated positive perceptions of the effects of using TED Talks, indicating that TED Talks have contributed positively to their learning and listening experiences. The data from questionnaires and interviews revealed that most students perceived TED Talks as more effective than other platforms in improving their listening comprehension. This finding is consistent with previous studies, such as Wu (2020) who reported that students’ listening comprehension improved after learning through TED Talk videos, as well as Muthmainnah et al., (2025) found that students’ perceptions of TED Talks are generally positive because of their usefulness and compatibility. These results suggest that TED Talks can be considered an effective platform for developing listening comprehension, as also reflected in Figure 1.1, which shows students’ perceptions of the effectiveness of TED Talks.

Participants appreciated the clear delivery, well-prepared speeches, and high-quality videos presented by TED speakers, which contributed to their positive evaluations. Furthermore, this study confirms earlier research indicating that TED Talks serve as engaging, authentic, and motivating listening materials for EFL learners (Tilwani et al., 2022; Wu, 2020). However, unlike studies that primarily focused on improvements in listening test results (Humeniuk et al., 2021), this study highlights students’ subjective experiences and reveals that challenges such as difficulty understanding videos without subtitles and limited vocabulary persist for some learners despite the generally positive perceptions. These findings complement previous research by demonstrating that the effectiveness of TED Talks is closely related to learners’ listening proficiency levels and the strategies they employ during listening activities.

The use of the TED Talks YouTube channel has provided benefits to participants, as evidenced by questionnaire and interview data. The data analysis showed that most participants reported that their listening comprehension improved after watching the TED

Talks YouTube channel, and that they acquired vocabulary from watching TED Talks. This is supported by the researchers that stated TED Talks had a positive impact on EFL learners' listening skills, and their findings revealed that most participants agreed that TED Talks increased their vocabulary (Ho et al., 2024). In this regard, students indicated that TED Talks had an impact on them by expanding their vocabulary, introducing them to diverse topics, and providing motivational content (Rosanti & Wardah, 2025). In addition to its usefulness in improving listening skills and expanding new vocabulary, participants also reported that using TED Talk videos motivated them to learn listening skills. This is because TED Talks videos are exciting and inspiring for them. This is supported by researchers who state that students find learning using TED Talks more interesting and inspiring, which is also confirmed by teachers' opinions (Koziońska, 2021). These benefits demonstrate that TED Talks serve as a rich and authentic learning tool that supports various aspects of language skill development, one of which is discussed here: listening.

Despite the benefits of using TED Talks as a learning tool, some students still face challenges in developing their listening comprehension, particularly when watching videos without subtitles and encountering unfamiliar vocabulary. These difficulties are consistent with previous findings by (Astika & Kurniawan, 2020), who identified accent variation, speech rate, and vocabulary as major challenges in understanding TED Talks, as well as Thuy & Tuyen (2024), who reported that language complexity, fast speech, and diverse accents continued to hinder students' comprehension. Such challenges indicate that although TED Talks are perceived positively, linguistic difficulties cannot be fully overcome by positive perceptions alone. This may be explained by the complexity of authentic input in TED Talks, as natural spoken language requires higher cognitive processing, which can be particularly demanding for learners (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016).

Consequently, these findings reveal a gap between students' perceived benefits and their actual linguistic abilities in dealing with complex vocabulary and language structures, although it is also evident that not all students experience these challenges to the same extent, as some are able to tolerate the difficulty and comprehend the content without subtitles. From a pedagogical perspective, these findings suggest that while TED Talks hold strong potential as listening materials, their use should be carefully and systematically designed. Lecturers are encouraged to implement scaffolding strategies, including pre-listening activities to activate background knowledge and introduce key vocabulary, as well as post-listening tasks to reinforce comprehension of main ideas and supporting details (Kim, 2015; Thuy & Tuyen, 2024). Subtitles may be used as initial support for lower-proficiency learners and gradually reduced to promote independent listening, while explicit instruction in listening strategies such as listening for gist, note-taking, and inferencing can help students move beyond word-for-word comprehension (Ahmadi, 2016). Furthermore, allowing students to select TED Talks based on their interests may foster independent learning, increase intrinsic motivation, and enhance engagement, as noted by (Wulandari et al., 2024), positioning TED Talks not only as a listening medium but also as a tool for developing metacognitive skills and sustained learning.

In this study, several limitations were identified, particularly related to the scope of listening comprehension theory and the number of participants involved. The theoretical

analysis remains limited, as it does not encompass a wider range of listening theories and instructional approaches that could further explain the use of TED Talks as a learning medium; therefore, future research is recommended to expand the theoretical framework to obtain more comprehensive insights. In addition, the limited number of participants, especially the inclusion of only three interviewees, constrained the depth and breadth of the data analysis and reduced the diversity of perspectives, making it difficult to draw broader conclusions; thus, involving more participants in future studies would better represent the phenomenon under investigation.

Despite these limitations, the findings of this study can be meaningfully interpreted through established listening comprehension theories. In line with Krashen's Input Hypothesis, TED Talks provide authentic and comprehensible English input through real contexts, meaningful topics, and visual support, which help learners understand messages even when not all linguistic elements are fully comprehended (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016; Kim, 2015). Listening comprehension involves the simultaneous integration of linguistic and cognitive processes (Ahmadi, 2016). The visual support and structured presentations in TED Talks thus facilitate students' understanding of main ideas despite challenges posed by unfamiliar vocabulary.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study explored students' perceptions of using TED Talks learning tools for listening comprehension towards English Education EFL students at Universitas Negeri Semarang. The results showed that students had a positive perceptions towards TED Talks and generally received the effectiveness of using TED Talks as authentic materials for their listening comprehension. However, the researchers also found that students experienced challenges with TED Talks, including difficulty comprehending video content without subtitles and unfamiliar vocabulary. However, to face these challenges, lectures are encouraged to implements scaffolding strategies to students including the pre-listening activities and introduce them to the new vocabularies. Lectures allowed students to select the video with subtitles on it based their interest which might help students to hinder these challenges.

This study has limitations in the analysis of listening comprehension theory. The theoretical analysis presented is still limited and does not encompass other relevant theories and approaches to listening learning for the use of TED Talks as a learning medium. Therefore, future researchers are suggested to expand the scope of relevant listening learning theories and approaches in the use of TED Talks to obtain more comprehensive research results. In addition, this study included few participants, causing a lack of in-depth explanation and scope of the use of TED Talks. Therefore, future researchers may involve more participants to explore students' perceptions of TED Talks in greater depth.

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