

Students' Perceptions of the Directed Listening Strategy in Teaching Listening: a Case Study at a Bible School

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A B S T R A C T

Listening comprehension plays a crucial role in developing learners' overall language proficiency; however, many EFL learners experience difficulties due to limited exposure to structured listening strategies, particularly in heterogeneous classrooms. This study aimed to explore students' perceptions of the implementation of the Directed Listening Strategy (DLS) in teaching listening comprehension at a Bible School. A descriptive qualitative case study design was employed, involving classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with 11 students from diverse age groups ranging from 17 to 30 years old and educational backgrounds. The data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis through coding and thematic categorization. The findings indicate that students perceived DLS as helpful in supporting their engagement and comprehension during listening activities. Among the three stages, the pre-listening stage was perceived as the most beneficial in reducing confusion and preparing students cognitively. Overall, the study concludes that the Directed Listening Strategy is a supportive instructional approach for teaching listening comprehension to learners with limited listening experience in heterogeneous EFL classrooms.

Keywords: *Directed Listening Strategy (DLS), listening comprehension, students' perceptions, heterogeneous class, EFL learners.*

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INTRODUCTION

Listening comprehension is one of the fundamental skills in foreign language learning, as it supports learners' overall language development, including vocabulary growth, pronunciation awareness, and understanding of spoken interaction. Effective listening skills are essential for both academic achievement and social communication, particularly in contexts where English is learned as a foreign language. Despite its importance, listening is often perceived as the most challenging language skill due to factors such as limited vocabulary, rapid speech, unfamiliar accents, and the cognitive demands required to process spoken input in real time (Alzamil, 2021) (Namaziandost et al., 2019). Listening comprehension is also influenced by contextual factors, including learning environment, instructional tools, and classroom atmosphere, which shape learners' ability to focus and construct meaning from oral input (Zhou, 2020) (Nuna et al., 2025).

In classroom practice, many learners continue to experience difficulties in listening comprehension because they receive limited instructional support during listening activities. Listening is not a passive process; rather, it requires learners to actively discriminate sounds, interpret stress and intonation, and connect incoming information with prior knowledge. For this reason, teachers are encouraged to employ instructional strategies that provide guidance and scaffolding throughout the listening process (Movva et al., 2022). These challenges become more complex in heterogeneous classrooms, where students differ in age, educational background, and prior exposure to English. In such contexts, a single instructional approach

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may not address the diverse needs of learners, highlighting the need for adaptive and structured listening strategies.

One instructional approach that addresses these challenges is the Directed Listening Strategy (DLS). Directed Listening Strategy is a structured listening approach that guides learners through three systematic stages: pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening. In the pre-listening stage, learners are prepared cognitively through activities such as topic introduction, vocabulary prediction, and activating prior knowledge. During the while-listening stage, learners are guided to focus on main ideas and specific information through purposeful listening tasks. In the post-listening stage, learners reflect on their understanding through discussion, clarification, and feedback (Osman & Alkbiri, 2024). Previous studies suggest that structured listening strategies such as DLS can support learners in organizing their listening process, maintaining attention, and engaging more actively with spoken texts. However, much of the existing research on listening strategies has been conducted in relatively homogeneous classroom settings, where learners share similar age ranges or educational backgrounds. Through these stages, DLS helps learners organize their listening process, maintain attention, and engage more actively with spoken texts.

Moreover, many studies on listening strategies have primarily adopted quantitative approaches that emphasize learning outcomes or measurable gains in listening performance. While these studies provide valuable evidence of effectiveness, they often give limited attention to learners' perspectives on how listening strategies are implemented in real classroom contexts. Students' perceptions are an important aspect of instructional research, as they offer insights into how learners experience teaching practices, respond to instructional guidance, and perceive the usefulness of strategy-based instruction during classroom activities.

Addressing these gaps, the present study explores students' perceptions of the implementation of the Directed Listening Strategy (DLS) in teaching listening comprehension at a Bible School. The study is situated in a heterogeneous classroom consisting of learners from diverse age groups and educational backgrounds with limited prior experience in English listening activities. Using a qualitative case study design, this research examines how DLS is implemented during listening instruction and how students perceive each stage of the strategy. By focusing on a Bible School context, this study aims to provide in-depth insights into the use of structured listening strategies in a unique educational setting and to offer practical implications for English teachers working with heterogeneous EFL learners who require clear and supportive instructional guidance.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore students' perceptions of the implementation of the Directed Listening Strategy (DLS) in teaching listening comprehension within a Bible School context. A qualitative approach was selected because the study did not aim to measure learning outcomes or statistically examine the effectiveness of the strategy, but rather to gain an in-depth understanding of how DLS was implemented and how it was experienced by students in a real classroom setting. The case study design enabled a detailed examination of instructional practices and student responses in a heterogeneous learning environment.

Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at Bethel Injil Sepenuh Bible School (SABIS), a religious-based educational institution located in Surabaya, Indonesia. This setting was selected because the English listening class consisted of students from diverse age groups and educational backgrounds, representing a heterogeneous classroom context. The participants were 11 students enrolled in the only English listening class at the school. The students ranged in age from 17 to 30 years and had varying levels of English proficiency and prior listening experience. Some students were able to understand basic classroom instructions and short-

spoken texts, while others demonstrated higher confidence in comprehending spoken English. The small number of participants allowed for in-depth observation and the collection of rich qualitative data.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected using two main instruments: classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. Classroom observations were conducted over eight meetings to document how the teacher implemented the Directed Listening Strategy during listening instruction. Observation sheets were used to record teacher practices and students' verbal and non-verbal responses across the three stages of DLS: pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening. The observation focused on instructional activities such as topic introduction, vocabulary activation, guiding questions, listening tasks, and post-listening discussions, as well as students' engagement, participation, and attentiveness during the lessons.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted after the completion of the eight meetings to obtain in-depth data on students' perceptions of the Directed Listening Strategy. All participants were interviewed individually. Each interview lasted approximately 10–15 minutes and was conducted in Indonesian to allow students to express their thoughts freely and comfortably without language barriers. The interview questions were open-ended and focused on students' experiences during each stage of DLS, the perceived benefits of the strategy, challenges encountered during listening activities, and their overall impressions of learning listening through DLS.

Procedures

The research was carried out in several stages. Prior to data collection, the researcher collaborated with the English teacher to design lesson plans integrating the Directed Listening Strategy and to prepare research instruments. At the beginning of the study, students were introduced to the concept and stages of DLS. During the implementation phase, the English teacher applied DLS consistently during regular listening lessons over eight meetings. The researcher acted as a non-participant observer, recording instructional practices and student responses. After the implementation period, semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants to gather reflective data on their perceptions of the strategy.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed a qualitative descriptive approach. Observation notes and interview transcripts were analyzed to identify recurring patterns and themes related to the implementation of DLS and students' perceptions of its use. Interview data were transcribed verbatim and reread several times to ensure familiarity and accuracy. The data were then coded and grouped into themes representing perceived benefits, challenges, engagement, motivation, and suitability of DLS in a heterogeneous classroom.

Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were applied. Credibility was enhanced through data triangulation by comparing data from classroom observations and interviews. Prolonged engagement over eight meetings allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the classroom context. Dependability was supported by using consistent observation procedures and interview guidelines throughout the study, ensuring that the data collection process was systematic and transparent.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Implementation of the Directed Listening Strategy (DLS)

Classroom observation findings indicate that the Directed Listening Strategy (DLS) was implemented consistently through three instructional stages: pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening across eight meetings. The teacher systematically guided students through each stage, reflecting the core principles of strategy-based listening instruction.

During the pre-listening stage, the teacher introduced the topic, activated background knowledge, and guided students to predict vocabulary related to the listening text. These activities aimed to prepare students cognitively before listening. One student stated, "Before

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listening, the teacher explained the topic and some words, so I was not confused when the audio started" (Student 2). Observation data showed that students actively participated by raising their hands, sharing predicted vocabulary, taking notes, and paying close attention to the teacher's explanations.

In the while-listening stage, the teacher played the audio twice. The first playback focused on identifying the main ideas, while the second required students to answer more detailed comprehension questions. Observation data revealed that students listened attentively, highlighted keywords, and revised their answers between playbacks. As one student explained, "Listening twice helped me understand better because the first time I only caught the main idea" (Student 5).

During the post-listening stage, the teacher facilitated discussion and answer confirmation. Students were encouraged to explain their answers, identify supporting information, and clarify misunderstandings. One student reported, "After listening, we discussed the answers, so I understood my mistakes" (Student 7). Vocabulary clarification and pronunciation modeling were also emphasized, allowing students to consolidate their understanding after listening.

Students' Perceptions of the Directed Listening Strategy in Facilitating Listening Comprehension

Interview findings reveal that students perceived the Directed Listening Strategy as helpful in facilitating their understanding of listening tasks. Students reported that the clear and systematic stages of DLS made listening activities easier to follow compared to their previous learning experiences. The guidance provided before, during, and after listening helped students focus on key information and reduced confusion during listening tasks. One participant stated, "The steps are clear, so I know what I should focus on when listening" (Student 4). Students indicated that the structured guidance provided before, during, and after listening helped them focus on key information and remain engaged throughout the listening activities.

Students' Perceptions of the Pre-Listening Stage

The findings show that most students perceived the pre-listening stage as the most helpful component of DLS. Activities such as topic introduction and vocabulary prediction helped students feel more prepared and confident before listening to the audio. One student explained, "When we learn vocabulary first, I feel more confident and ready to listen" (Student 1). This finding supports theoretical perspectives that stress the importance of activating prior knowledge before listening. Pre-listening activities enabled students to anticipate content and set listening goals, which contributed to better comprehension.

Vocabulary Development and Pronunciation Awareness

Students also perceived that the implementation of the Directed Listening Strategy supported vocabulary development and pronunciation awareness. Through vocabulary prediction in the pre-listening stage and clarification during the post-listening stage, students encountered new words repeatedly and learned how they were pronounced in spoken English. This process helped students connect written vocabulary with spoken forms. One student noted, "I learned new words and how to pronounce them correctly after listening and discussion" (Student 6).

These perceptions align with views that listening provides essential language input for vocabulary acquisition and pronunciation awareness. The structured and repeated exposure to spoken input through DLS enabled students to notice linguistic features and improve their recognition of words during listening activities. This finding reinforces previous research suggesting that strategy-based listening instruction contributes to broader language development beyond comprehension alone.

Students' Motivation and Confidence in Listening

The findings also indicate that students experienced increased motivation and confidence when learning listening through DLS. Students reported feeling less anxious because the listening activities were guided step by step. Students also reported increased motivation and confidence when learning through DLS. One student stated, "I am not afraid

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anymore because the teacher explains what to do step by step" (Student 8). The structured guidance reduced anxiety and encouraged active participation during listening activities.

Suitability of the Directed Listening Strategy for Heterogeneous Learners

Finally, students perceived DLS as suitable for heterogeneous classrooms. The step-by-step structure helped learners with different levels of listening ability follow the lesson more easily. One participant mentioned, "Even though our levels are different, the steps help everyone follow the lesson" (Student 9). This finding highlights DLS as an inclusive strategy for heterogeneous classrooms. This finding suggests that DLS functions as an inclusive instructional approach that accommodates differences in age, prior listening experience, and learning pace.

Discussion

The findings indicate that the Directed Listening Strategy provides structured guidance that supports students throughout the listening process. The consistent implementation of pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening stages aligns with views of listening as an active cognitive process involving planning, monitoring, and evaluation. The students' positive perceptions suggest that DLS helps learners manage cognitive demands during listening activities. The strong preference for the pre-listening stage highlights the importance of activating prior knowledge and introducing key vocabulary before listening. This supports theoretical perspectives emphasizing that preparation reduces cognitive load and enhances comprehension, particularly for learners with limited exposure to spoken English.

Students' perceptions of improved vocabulary development and pronunciation awareness indicate that listening instruction can contribute to broader language development beyond comprehension alone. Repeated exposure to spoken input and post-listening clarification enabled learners to connect written and spoken forms of language. Moreover, increased motivation and confidence reported by students demonstrate the affective benefits of structured listening instruction. Clear guidance reduced anxiety and encouraged active participation, which is especially important in heterogeneous classrooms where learners vary in age, background, and proficiency. Overall, the findings suggest that the Directed Listening Strategy is an inclusive and effective instructional approach for teaching listening comprehension in heterogeneous EFL contexts, such as Bible Schools, where learners require explicit guidance and supportive instructional structures.

CONCLUSIONS

This study explored students' perceptions of the implementation of the Directed Listening Strategy (DLS) in teaching listening comprehension in a heterogeneous classroom at a Bible School. The findings indicate that students perceived the strategy positively and considered the structured pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening stages helpful in supporting their listening comprehension. The consistent guidance provided by the teacher enabled students to engage more actively in listening activities despite differences in age, educational background, and prior listening experience. Among the three stages, the pre-listening stage was perceived as the most helpful, as activities such as topic introduction and vocabulary prediction prepared students cognitively and reduced confusion before listening. In addition, students perceived that the implementation of DLS supported vocabulary awareness, pronunciation recognition, and increased motivation and confidence during listening activities. These findings suggest that structured and scaffolded listening instruction can create a more supportive and inclusive learning environment, particularly for learners with limited listening experience in heterogeneous classroom contexts. From a pedagogical perspective, the findings imply that listening instruction should be accompanied by clear guidance before, during, and after listening activities rather than relying solely on audio exposure and comprehension questions. English teachers, especially those working in heterogeneous classrooms, are encouraged to implement structured listening strategies such as DLS to support students' comprehension, engagement, and confidence. For future research, it is recommended that studies be conducted in different educational contexts or with larger

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participant groups to obtain broader insights into students' perceptions of DLS. Future studies may also employ mixed-method designs to examine not only students' perceptions but also the impact of DLS on listening performance.

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