


Students' Perceptions of Enjoyable Listening Activities in a Low Exposure EFL Classroom at MTS. Zainul Irsyad

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ABSTRACT

Listening is a significant skill in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, especially in low-exposure settings where students have limited contact with English outside the classroom. However, many students struggle and demonstrate low motivation as a result of monotonous teaching approaches and a lack of engaging activities. Previous research has mostly focused on learning outcomes rather than students' perceptions of enjoyable listening activities. Furthermore, little research has explored students' perceptions in low-exposure settings. As a result, the purpose of this study is to investigate students' perceptions and determine the types of listening activities they enjoy the most. This study used a qualitative case study approach with students from MTs. Zainul Irsyad. Data were obtained through classroom observations, interviews, and documentation, and were analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing techniques. The findings show that while students initially have negative perceptions, they respond positively to participatory activities such as songs, videos, and group discussions. Finally, enjoyable and interactive activities increase students' interest and motivation in learning through listening.

Keywords: *Listening Activities, Student Perceptions, EFL Classroom, Student Engagement*

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of technology and globalization has had a tremendous impact on the field of education, especially the teaching and study of English as a Foreign Language (Toleuzhan et al., 2023). In today's world, English is seen as a crucial skill for communication, academics, and future jobs (Kalyani, 2024). As a result, English language teaching is supposed to provide students with meaningful and effective learning opportunities. However, in many EFL environments, particularly in developing countries, students continue to confront issues due to a lack of exposure to English outside of the classroom (Parawangsa et al., 2024). This disease makes it difficult for students to improve their language skills, particularly listening, which necessitates ongoing exposure to actual language input (Bovkun-Saass et al., 2025). Low exposure is a severe problem because language acquisition requires constant and relevant input. Without adequate exposure, kids have little opportunity to improve their ability to distinguish sounds, acquire meaning, and increase their vocabulary in real-world circumstances (Jahrani & Listia, 2023). This can impede their general language development and impair their confidence in speaking English. As a result, the quality of English learning is frequently hampered by a lack of interesting and effective teaching tactics.

Listening is an essential skill in language learning, although it is frequently seen as the hardest skill for EFL students to master (Cahyani, 2025). Many students experience challenges in listening comprehension, particularly understanding spoken language in real time, due to limited vocabulary and insufficient exposure to English (DUNYO et al., 2023). The issues are exacerbated by repetitive instructional techniques and a deficiency of stimulating activities, resulting in ennui, diminished motivation, and limited engagement in listening tasks (Saparbayevich, 2026). Unlike reading and writing, listening needs students to

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understand spoken language in real time, which can be difficult if they are unfamiliar with the sounds, accents, or terminology used (Wusqo et al., 2024). According to Field (as cited LINH, n.d.) Listening is regarded one of the most challenging abilities in learning English as a foreign language because it demands learners to digest spoken language in real time while also interpreting meaning.

In a low-exposure EFL classroom, where students have little interaction with English outside of school, the teacher's involvement is critical in developing effective listening exercises (Elmezughi & Zidan, 2026). Teachers are supposed to develop learning settings that mirror real-world language use and allow students to participate actively in the learning process. However, not all listening activities are seen favourably by pupils. Some activities may fail to pique pupils' interest, but others may boost motivation and enjoyment. Understanding students' views of listening activities is critical for improving teaching techniques and learning results (Movva et al., 2022).

The concept of student perception is important in the learning process because it describes how students interpret and respond to instructional activities (Candrasa & Cen, 2023). Positive impressions can boost students' motivation, engagement, and readiness to contribute, whereas negative perceptions can undermine learning (Rezai et al., 2025). Students' impressions of listening activities are influenced by a variety of elements, including activity type, difficulty level, media use, and teaching approaches. Enjoyable learning experiences are especially helpful since they minimize anxiety and boost students' confidence in comprehending spoken English.

One strategy to improving listening exercises is to incorporate entertaining and interactive methods that are relevant to students' interests and learning preferences (Setyawan et al., 2022). Listening to music, watching movies, and participating in group conversations are all popular ways to make listening more enjoyable (Demirci et al., 2023). These exercises not only provide valuable feedback, but they also foster a more relaxed and fun learning environment. When students like the learning experience, they are more likely to be engaged and driven to develop their listening abilities.

Previous research has demonstrated that engaging and interactive listening activities can dramatically increase student engagement and understanding. According to research (Sivakami & Gunasekaran, 2025), the integration of multimedia, realistic materials, and collaborative learning can increase student attention and decrease boredom in listening lessons. However, rather than delving deeply into students' opinions, the majority of these research focus on the usefulness of specific strategies. There is still little study on how students perceive various forms of listening activities, particularly in low-exposure EFL courses (Fung & Lo, 2023). Nevertheless, despite the increasing interest in listening instruction, the majority of prior studies have concentrated on learning outcomes and instructional efficacy, with scant consideration given to students' perceptions of enjoyable listening activities, especially in low-exposure EFL contexts. This indicates a clear gap in the literature that requires attention.

MTs. Zainul Irsyad classifies pupils as low-exposure EFL learners because they have few opportunities to use and hear English outside of the classroom. This condition makes listening exercises more difficult and necessitates teachers employing suitable tactics to keep kids' interest. Understanding which activities students find pleasurable can help teachers create more effective and engaging lessons. As a result, it is critical to explore students' views and preferences for listening activities in this unique environment.

Based on these considerations, the purpose of this study is to investigate students' opinions of fun listening activities and determine the types of activities that they find most engaging. By concentrating on students' experiences and perspectives, the study hopes to provide further insight into how to improve listening activities in low-exposure EFL classrooms. This study is likely to lead to the development of more effective teaching strategies for increasing students' motivation and involvement in listening classes.

Furthermore, listening remains a difficult but necessary ability in EFL acquisition, particularly in low-exposure settings. The success of listening teaching is determined not only by the materials utilized, but also by how students perceive and experience the exercises. As

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a result, understanding students' opinions and preferences is critical to designing engaging and effective learning experiences. This study addresses this requirement by investigating students' attitudes toward listening activities at MTs. Zainul Irsyad, with the goal of strengthening teaching methods and assisting pupils with language growth. However, past research has mostly focused on the efficacy of listening tactics and learning outcomes, with little attention paid to students' views of fun listening activities, especially in low-exposure EFL classrooms.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design and a case study approach to studying students' opinions of enjoyable listening activities in a low-exposure EFL course at MTs. Zainul Irsyad (Ekoto et al., 2022). The participants of this study consisted of 25 students from one class who were purposively selected based on their limited exposure to English outside the classroom and their active engagement in listening activities. The study was conducted for a month, and the researcher collected detailed data by conducting repeated classroom observations and semi-structured interviews.

Data were collected using multiple methods to ensure comprehensive insights. First, classroom observations were conducted to examine students' engagement and the implementation of listening activities. Second, semi-structured interviews were carried out to explore students' perceptions, experiences, and preferences in greater depth. Third, documentation, including lesson plans and classroom records, was analyzed to support and validate the findings. The data were analyzed using qualitative techniques, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. These processes enabled the researcher to identify key themes and patterns related to students' perceptions and participation. To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the data, triangulation was applied by comparing information from multiple data sources and methods (Meydan & Akkas, 2024).

This methodological approach enabled the researcher to obtain in-depth and comprehensive insights into the types of listening activities that students found enjoyable, as well as how these perceptions influenced their engagement in the learning process. (Faridah Laili, Abd. Aziz Wahab, 2023).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Students' Perceptions of Enjoyable Listening Activities

The results show that students in a low-exposure EFL classroom at MTs. Zainul Irsyad initially had negative attitudes concerning listening activities. Many students struggle to understand spoken English because of their limited vocabulary, rapid speaking, and lack of exposure to English outside of the classroom. These obstacles lead to low motivation and involvement during listening assignments.

This finding is validated by interview data, as students stated:

"I feel bored because I don't understand what the speaker says." (Student 1)

"Listening is difficult and confusing for me." (Student 2)

Furthermore, students indicated that repetitious educational techniques contribute to their lack of interest:

"We only listen and answer questions, so it's boring." (Student 4)

However, students' perception improves when listening activities are more engaging and interactive. Students feel more supported and understand the material when they receive clear explanations. This is evident from the student's statement, *"When the teacher explains first, it is easier to understand."* (Student 1). As a result, students' perceptions of listening are influenced not only by the amount of material available, but also by the manner in which the teacher teaches and the methods used.

To summarize these observations, the data are shown in the table below:

Table 1. Summary of Students' Perceptions and Enjoyable Listening Activities

No	Key Aspects	Categories	Key Findings	Impact on Students
1.	Student Perceptions	• Initial perceptions	Negative (bored, difficult, uninterested)	Low motivation
		• Difficulties	Can't understand the audio; it's too fast	Confusion while studying
		• Teaching methods	Monotonous (listen and answer only)	
2.	Causes	• Internal factors	Limited vocabulary	Lack of engagement Difficulty understanding the material
		• External factors	Lack of interaction & limited variety in teaching methods	Passive students
3.	Fun Activities	• Songs	Interesting and fun	Boosts motivation
		• Video and subtitles	Helps understanding with	Better understanding
4.	The Role of the Teacher	• Group discussion	Interactive	Increasing participation
		• Initial explanation	Helping students understand the material	Reducing confusion
		• Guidance Strategies	& Making learning more focused	Boosting self-confidence

Types of Listening Activities Considered Enjoyable

The findings show that kids prefer listening exercises that are interesting, participatory, and contextually relevant. Students found several types of activities enjoyable, such as listening to songs, watching movies with subtitles, and participating in group discussions.

Listening to songs was one of the most popular activities because it fosters a comfortable and enjoyable learning environment. Students claimed that songs help them acquire pronunciation and vocabulary more easily:

"I like listening to songs because it is more fun and easier to understand."

(Student 5)

Watching movies with subtitles was also deemed beneficial, as it provides both visual and auditory input, allowing students to better absorb the content:

"Watching videos helps me understand because I can see what is happening."(Student 6).

Furthermore, students gave excellent feedback on group discussions, which allow them to communicate with classmates and clarify meaning together:

"Discussing with friends helps me understand the meaning better." (Student

7)

These data imply that students prefer activities that combine aural input with visual accompaniment and allow for active engagement. Such exercises not only make learning more entertaining, but they also help students understand auditory contents better.

Additionally, students prefer interactive activities like group discussions since they allow them to exchange ideas and clarify their understanding with others. Students become more active and engaged in the learning process by participating in discussions, rather than passively listening. This contact boosts their confidence and minimizes fear when dealing with hearing materials. It also promotes collaborative learning, in which students help each other understand difficult topics.

Overall, the data show that enjoyable listening activities involve the utilization of engaging media, interactive learning strategies, and supportive instructor guidance. Activities that incorporate audio-visual aspects and social interaction not only make learning more engaging, but also improve students' comprehension and motivation. As a result, choosing proper sorts of listening exercises is critical for generating an effective and enjoyable learning experience, particularly in low-exposure EFL courses.

Discussion

Students' Perceptions of Listening Activities

The study's findings indicate that students' perceptions of listening activities in EFL classrooms are becoming more negative, particularly at the beginning of learning. Students claimed trouble understanding the audio because of the speaker's rapid pace and low vocabulary, such as *"I feel bored because I don't understand what the speaker says"* and *"Listening is difficult and confusing for me."* This finding suggests that cognitive difficulty in processing linguistic material can improve emotional response in students, which in turn affects their motivation and performance in listening activities (Odiljonovna et al., 2024). In addition, students claim that monotonous learning methods, such as listening to audio and answering questions, make them uninterested (Bousquet et al., 2022), as stated in the quote *"We only listen and answer questions, so it is boring."*

This is consistent with John Field's assertion that listening is a complex process since it requires simultaneous comprehension of sounds, vocabulary, and meaning over a short period of time (Sahara, 2023). When students do not have sufficient language skills, the process becomes more difficult. Aside from that, the emotional state of students resulting from their learning experience can be explained by Stephen Krashen's Affective Filter theory (Q. Li & Zhou, 2023), which states that factors such as boredom, low self-esteem, and boredom can impede the learning process. In this context, students who are unable to comprehend material may have an increase in affective filtering, resulting in input language that cannot be properly processed. Because of this, negative student perceptions are caused not only by increased material scarcity, but also by learning methods that do not meet their needs.

However, the results of the study show that students' perceptions might improve when listening activities are more engaging and structured. The student stated *"When the teacher explains first, it is easier to understand,"* implying that the presence of a pre-listening activity such as initial explanation might assist students in self-awareness before receiving linguistic input (Benavides Vargas, 2023). This highlights the importance of the teacher's role in providing scaffolding so that students can understand the material more effectively. As a result, students' attitudes toward listening are dynamic and influenced by the learning experiences they had in school.

These findings suggest that students' negative perceptions are caused not just by the inherent difficulty of listening, but also by the manner in which listening exercises are organized and delivered in the classroom. When listening tasks are reduced to passive activities, such as completing questions after hearing, students feel cognitive overload and decreased engagement. This can be described in terms of cognitive processing in listening, which requires learners to decode sounds, recognize language, and construct meaning in real time (Shu et al., 2024). Without enough scaffolding, this process becomes overwhelming for students in low-exposure settings.

Furthermore, the improvement in students' opinions following the introduction of more engaging activities is consistent with the concepts of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Putri, 2025), which stresses meaningful contact and active participation in language learning. When kids are actively participating, they are more likely to create meaning and gain confidence. This also supports Krashen's material Hypothesis, which states that learners learn language more effectively when exposed to intelligible and meaningful material in a low-anxiety context.

This study found that students prefer interactive listening activities and use engaging media. According to the results of the survey, students stated that "I like listening to songs because it is fun" and "I like watching videos with subtitles because I can understand them better." This demonstrates that the use of media such as music and video not only increases the enjoyment of students, but also aids in their understanding through audio and visual combinations (Othman et al., 2022). Students also preferred interaction-based activities, such as group discussions, because they allow them to share insights and learn with their peers.

This is consistent with David Nunan's theory, which emphasizes the need of using authentic materials in language learning to improve student performance (Choi & Nunan, 2022). Authentic materials such as music and videos provide a new context for learning, making it more relevant and interesting (Shevchenko, 2025). Aside from that, the use of interactive activities undermines the principle of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasizes the need of direct communication in the learning process (Putri, 2025). In this case, students are not only receiving passive information, but they are also actively participating in the learning process.

Further, this concept can be explained using Lev Vygotsky's theory, which states that learning occurs through social interactions and environmental influences (Taber, 2025). In this context, group discussion and teacher explanations serve as scaffolding, assisting students in understanding difficult material. Interaction with peers and teachers enables students to be in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where they can learn more effectively with the help of others (Irshad et al., 2021). As a result, enjoyable listening activities are not only visually appealing, but also allow for social interaction and learning environments.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that a combination of authentic media use, interactive learning methods, and active guru behavior is critical in resulting in enjoyable listening. Good activities not only improve students' understanding, but they also foster motivation, self-confidence, and enthusiasm for learning. As a result, the teacher must adjust the students' preferences and employ a variety of strategies in order to make listening lessons more effective and enjoyable.

In addition to the findings, it is worth noting that students' positive responses to engaging listening activities suggest a transition from passive to active learning behavior (Paramole et al., 2024). When kids are exposed to engaging media, such as songs and films, they not only receive but also actively process meaning. This shows that genuine engagement is critical for supporting deeper cognitive processes (S. Li & Lajoie, 2022). In low-exposure settings, where authentic input is restricted, such activities serve as a substitute for real-life language exposure, allowing students to experience language in more natural and contextualized ways.

Furthermore, the data suggest that integrating multimodal learning aspects, such as auditory, visual, and social interaction, might greatly lower learners' cognitive burden. When students listen to audio accompanied by graphics or subtitles, they may relate sounds to written forms and contextual signals, improving understanding (Andini, 2025). This is consistent with the premise that learning is more successful when information is delivered in several channels, particularly for learners with limited linguistic resources (Alam et al., 2026). As a result, multimodal input is both interesting and pedagogically effective in boosting listening comprehension.

Another key finding from the data is the significance of emotional engagement in molding students' educational experiences. Enjoyable activities appear to reduce student anxiety and promote a more comfortable classroom environment. This emotional security enables pupils to take chances, such as guessing meanings or engaging in debates, without worrying about making mistakes (Ceneciro et al., 2023). As a result, the learning environment becomes more encouraging and student-centered, which is critical for instilling long-term motivation and positive attitudes toward language acquisition.

Moreover, the data indicate that diversity in teaching tactics is an important role in keeping students interested. Repetitive and predictable activities tend to limit student

attention and participation, whereas varied and dynamic activities foster curiosity and engagement (Peters, 2025). This suggests that teachers must constantly adjust and diversify their instructional methods to fit students' preferences and learning demands. Teachers can achieve a more balanced learning experience by addressing both the cognitive and emotive elements of learning (Kuo et al., 2024).

Ultimately, the findings have implications for instructional design in low-exposure EFL settings. Teachers are advised to consider not only the content of listening resources, but also how the activities are presented. Lessons structured with defined stages, such as pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening combined with engaging media and interactive assignments can improve students' comprehension and involvement significantly. In this approach, listening activities become more than just a test of comprehension, but also a meaningful learning experience that helps students build their overall language skills.

The preference for activities like music, films, and group discussions emphasizes the value of multimodal and interactive learning settings. These activities give not just aural input, but also visual and contextual support, allowing learners to better understand spoken language. From a theoretical standpoint, this conclusion is compatible with Dual Coding Theory (Monzel et al., 2022), which claims that information is easier to receive and retain when provided in both spoken and visual formats.

Furthermore, the use of collaborative activities, such as group discussions, is consistent with Vygotsky's Social Constructivism principles, which hold that learning occurs through social interaction and shared meaning-making (Rachmad, 2025). Peer contact allows students to negotiate meaning, clarify misunderstandings, and gain confidence in using the language. This implies that delightful listening practices are not only amusing, but also pedagogically successful in promoting both cognitive and social aspects of language learning.

CONCLUSIONS

This study found that students in a low-exposure EFL classroom at MTs. Zainul Irsyad initially showed negative perceptions toward listening activities due to limited vocabulary, rapid spoken English, and minimal exposure to English outside the classroom. Monotonous instructional methods also reduced students' engagement and motivation during listening exercises. However, the findings revealed that more interactive and participatory listening activities could significantly improve students' perceptions and motivation. Pre-listening explanations from teachers helped students better understand the material and increased their confidence during learning activities. In addition, students preferred enjoyable and authentic activities such as listening to music, watching subtitled videos, and participating in group discussions. These activities enhanced comprehension through the integration of visual and auditory input as well as active participation. Overall, the effectiveness of listening instruction depends not only on the activities used but also on how they are implemented. Future studies are recommended to involve larger and more diverse educational contexts for broader findings.

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