

From Comprehension Struggles to Reflective Growth: An Exploratory Study of Vodcast Use in Self-Directed Listening among Beginner EFL Learners

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Abstract

This qualitative study investigated the experiences of beginner English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners utilizing English vodcasts for self-directed listening and metacognitive reflection. During a six-week intervention, 25 university students in West Sumatera, Indonesia, interacted with authentic spoken English input, supported by structured reflection. Data from Vodcast Analysis Templates and Oral Recordings documented comprehension processes, strategic responses, metacognitive insights, and affective engagement. Thematic analysis revealed four interconnected themes: challenges in listening comprehension, strategic responses to difficulties, metacognitive reflection and awareness, and affective engagement and motivation. Students often encountered difficulties with fast speech, unfamiliar accents, idiomatic expressions, and complex content, and they addressed these challenges through repetition, note-taking, and the use of subtitles. The templates facilitated learners in articulating breakdowns, evaluating listening behaviors, and recognizing growth. Overreliance on subtitles and repetition occasionally promoted superficial processing; some learners focused on vocabulary without incorporating it into discourse comprehension; and inconsistent oral responses indicated variable spoken fluency. The findings indicate that vodcasts can enhance autonomy, strategy use, and reflective learning, while also identifying areas that need instructional improvement.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language; Learner autonomy; Listening comprehension; Metacognitive awareness; Quality Education; Self-directed learning

Introduction

Listening comprehension is one of the fundamental and intricate skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning which often challenge novice learners to understand the complexities of authentic spoken English (Newton & Nation, 2020; Nguyen, 2020). Unlike the learning materials specifically designed and supported for classroom purposes, authentic learning sources – such as podcast and vodcast – present higher complexities and expose learners to spontaneous speech, multiple regional and international accents, shortenings, informal languages, as well as culture-rooted idioms (Hanifa, Yusuf, Yusra, & Suherdi, 2024; Mekheimer, 2024). Although these characteristics highlight linguistic authenticity, they often hinder beginners to identify key information, conclude meanings from contexts, and maintain comprehension on prolonged spoken (Goh, 2000; Yang, 2021; Yusra & Hanifa, 2023). This situation might result in cognitive overload, lower motivation and enthusiasm, resulting in a passive engagement which impact the development of communicative competence. Such challenges brought about pressing matter of pedagogical frameworks to match the linguistics and cognitive demands from authentic listening resources while supporting learners to transition from guided classroom activities to individual, self-regulated practices. The transition is essential for developing long-term listening proficiency, promoting learner autonomy, and enhancing adaptive metacognitive strategies (Hanifa & Yusra, 2024; Yabukoshi, 2023).

Recent advancements in educational technology have established podcasts and vodcasts as effective tools for language acquisition, enabling EFL learners to access vast materials of authentic linguistic input (Chan, 2014; Gonulal, 2022). Moreover, digital platforms improve accessibility and learner autonomy through customizable playback, repeated exposure, and interaction with diverse speech styles (Pinto & Leite, 2020). Studies have also indicated that these tools play a crucial role in enhancing linguistic competence, pronunciation, and listening fluency (Shunnar & Altweissi, 2022). However, much of the existing literature primarily addresses intermediate to advanced learners, which leaves some empirical focus on EFL novice learners' experiences and needs in relation to these technologies (Faramarzi, Tabrizi, & Chalak, 2019; Norte Fernández-Pacheco, 2016).

Podcasts and their roles on EFL listening development have been well-documented; however, specific impacts of vodcast-based learning on the self-directed listening practices of novice learners have not been thoroughly explored

(Bozorgian & Shamsi, 2022; Eragamreddy, 2024; Yeganeh & Izadpanah, 2021). Additionally, previous research has primarily focused on quantitative results—such as test scores and listening comprehension—while qualitative analyses of learners' reflective experiences, strategic engagement, and the cognitive processes involved in independent listening with vodcasts remain much unexplored (Andini & Burhanuddin, 2022; Javier, 2021). It is imperative to note such gap as the promotion of learner autonomy and metacognitive awareness is recognized to significantly influence listening development and long-term language proficiency (Jeremy Cross, 2016; Gökmen, 2021; Zeng & Goh, 2018). Therefore, addressing this research gap is essential for the development of pedagogical models that accommodate novice learners and are attuned to their distinct learning trajectories in technology-mediated environments.

One approach that is viable and has been proven to have pedagogical implications on learners' independent listening practice is metacognitive reflection. Incorporating this fundamental aspect of self-regulated learning, learners may systematically assess their listening processes, recognize instances of comprehension failure, and modify strategies to enhance performance (Bozorgian & Shamsi, 2022; Yabukoshi, 2021). Through the processes of reflection, learners' awareness of their individual learning needs would be enhanced, which further encourage them to be more responsible for personal progress. Research indicates that reflective listening tasks, including summarizing audio content, taking structured notes, and analyzing spoken discourse, enhance linguistic processing, retention, and critical thinking skills (Lee & Cha, 2020; Yang, 2021). Learners engaging on these tasks would be involved in active listening and subsequent evaluation where they assess comprehension, enhance strategies, and build confidence in addressing authentic materials. The increasing acknowledgment of reflection's significance in language learning necessitates a thorough examination of the relationship between novice learners' metacognitive reflection and vodcast-based listening. Examining the interaction between reflective practices and technology-mediated input offers a valuable avenue for research, especially in determining how this integration can improve learner autonomy, listening fluency, and sustained language development in EFL settings.

This research aims to look into the experiences of novice EFL learners participating in vodcast-based independent listening practices, focusing specifically

on structured reflective analysis. This study examines how learners address challenges, utilize listening strategies, and gain advantages from reflective interaction with authentic vodcast materials, providing essential insights into effective self-directed learning. This research highlights the pedagogical significance of incorporating technology and reflective methodologies in EFL instruction, emphasizing their potential to enhance metacognitive awareness and learner autonomy. The findings significantly enhance the current literature on authentic listening resources, metacognitive development, and independent learning in EFL contexts, while promoting innovative instructional strategies that enable learners to address real-world communicative challenges.

Research Methodology

This study used an exploratory qualitative research design to obtain comprehensive details on beginner English language learners' experiences with vodcast-based listening tasks and their related metacognitive reflections. This design was chosen for its effectiveness in capturing detailed data and elucidating the learners' internal processes, such as strategy use, emotional responses, and self-awareness, in a naturalistic and self-directed learning context (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The exploratory framework would allow researchers to emphasize participants' perceptions and responses to authentic English vodcasts, facilitating the emergence of grounded themes and insights centered on learners, which are particularly relevant for analyzing context-specific, personalized learning behaviors.

This study involved 25 novice English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, aged 18 to 21 years. Participants were enrolled in a Basic English listening course at a public university located in West Sumatera, Indonesia. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on these criteria: minimal prior exposure to authentic listening materials and a minimum of one semester of English instruction incorporating vodcasts. In addition, they possessed the requisite digital tools and fundamental understanding of the platforms used for self-directed learning which enabled them to engage autonomously while carrying out the vodcast-based tasks. This sample established the necessary conceptual relevance and internal consistency to investigate how beginner learners navigate, comprehend, and reflect on unmodified spoken English within a technology-mediated environment.

This study utilized two qualitative instruments, the Vodcast Analysis Templates and Oral Response Recordings, to examine the engagement of beginner EFL learners with vodcast-based listening and reflection. The tools were designed to elicit both written and spoken dimensions of learner experience, capturing the cognitive, metacognitive, and affective processes activated during weekly self-directed listening tasks. The study attempted to attain a comprehensive understanding of learners' processing of authentic English input and their navigation of comprehension challenges through the integration of structured written reflection and spoken synthesis (Chen, 2019; Cross, 2011).

The Vodcast Analysis Templates were completed on a weekly basis after each vodcast session and comprised three organized sections for six weeks. In the Content Summary section, learners synthesized the vodcast's main ideas, supporting details, and speaker intent in a 250–300-word format, thereby practicing gist extraction and enhancing macro-listening strategies. The Reflective Prompts section encouraged metacognitive analysis by posing questions related to listening difficulties, strategic approaches, and delivery characteristics including tone, accent, and pacing. The prompts were based on principles of reflective listening instruction and aimed to promote active monitoring and evaluation of comprehension strategies (Goh & Vandergrift, 2021). The concluding section, Vocabulary Focus, necessitated that learners identify five unfamiliar lexical items, define them utilizing dictionaries, and create original example sentences. This structured lexical engagement facilitated both in-depth vocabulary processing and effective application (Madarbakus-Ring, 2024).

Additionally, each participant submitted one five-minute Oral Response Recording after the completion of self-directed listening period, based on one vodcast of their selection. The spoken reflections provided supplementary data, revealing learners' capacity to verbally synthesize content and articulate their listening challenges and strategies employed. The recordings, while less structured than written templates, captured spontaneous expressions of comprehension, affect, and motivation, and revealed prosodic and paralinguistic indicators of engagement (Cross, 2011). The combination of these two instruments generated a complementary, multimodal dataset that effectively aligns with the study's objective of examining how beginner learners engage with self-directed, technology-mediated listening experiences.

The qualitative data obtained from the Vodcast Analysis Templates and Oral Response Recordings were subjected to thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. This method was selected for its effectiveness in revealing patterned meanings within extensive, text-dense datasets and its adaptability in facilitating inductive theme development without the constraints of predefined categories. Thematic analysis allowed the researchers to investigate both surface-level responses and deeper learner cognition, providing detailed insights into the engagement of beginner EFL learners with authentic listening input.

During the initial familiarization phase, researchers engaged with the dataset by thoroughly reviewing the written reflections, transcribing oral recordings as needed, and documenting analytic memos on emerging insights. This iterative engagement cultivated a comprehensive understanding of learner voice, tone, and variation. During the initial coding phase, the data were analyzed line-by-line to identify key features, including comprehension obstacles (e.g., "fast pace," "difficult accent"), employed strategies (e.g., "pause and replay," "note-taking"), and emotional responses (e.g., "felt frustrated," "was motivated"). The codes were recorded in a digital matrix, enabling researchers to analyze patterns both within and among participants. Careful attention was given to capturing both explicit statements and implicit cues concerning cognitive processing and affective engagement.

The third through sixth phases encompassed the processes of theme generation, review, definition, and interpretation. Codes were grouped into provisional themes, which were subsequently refined through iterative discussions and cross-checking among researchers. The final four themes—Listening Comprehension Challenges, Strategic Responses to Difficulty, Metacognitive Reflection and Awareness, and Affective Engagement and Motivation—were strongly substantiated by the data and illustrated the complex nature of learner experience. In the concluding phase, the researchers situated the themes within pertinent theoretical frameworks, such as metacognitive listening theory (Goh & Vandergrift, 2021) and the self-regulated learning approach (Zeng & Goh, 2018). This facilitated the development of a coherent analytic narrative that transcended descriptive reporting, providing conceptual insight into the ways in which beginner EFL learners navigate, reflect upon, and respond to authentic listening challenges.

In the current study, the systematic execution of research was enhanced through a number of strategies endorsed in qualitative research to ensure

trustworthiness. To begin with, research credibility was strengthened not only through the process of triangulation of the written templated and oral recordings but also the sustained engagement throughout the six-week period, allowing for the examination of patterns over time rather than as isolated instances (Stahl & King, 2020). In addition, the process of analysis involved collaboration from peer researchers to cross-verify codes and candidate themes to ensure interpretive coherence and transparency, in accordance with contemporary guidelines for reporting thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2023). Moreover, the description of the instructional context, participant profile, and task procedures enhanced transferability, enabling readers to assess applicability to similar EFL settings (Stahl & King, 2020). Apart from that, analytic decisions could be traced back to the dataset through analytic memos, coding matrices, and documented theme refinements, which conform to the dependability and confirmability of data. Finally, researchers' reflexivity was considered essential for interpretation. The researchers' familiarities with EFL listening instruction and interest in vodcast-mediated learning prompted the use of reflexive memos to explore how their pedagogical positioning and expectations might influence coding and theme development. This process involved a careful focus on prioritizing participants' language and reconsidering alternative interpretations to reduce the impact of preconceived notions on the final thematic analysis (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023).

Findings and Discussion

Findings

The analysis of Vodcast Analysis Templates and Oral Response Recordings identified four primary themes that characterize learners' experiences: (1) Listening Comprehension Challenges, (2) Strategic Responses to Difficulty, (3) Metacognitive Reflection and Awareness, and (4) Affective Engagement and Motivation. Themes were generated through an iterative thematic analysis that included both written and spoken data. The qualitative evidence from the 25 participants revealed diverse and interconnected experiences that illustrate how beginner-level EFL learners engage with and internalize self-directed vodcast-based listening.

Listening Comprehension Challenges

A prominent theme identified in the qualitative analysis was the significant challenges learners faced while interacting with authentic English vodcasts. Participants, despite receiving foundational listening instruction, faced various

comprehension barriers due to the natural pace, unfamiliar accent features, content density, and the absence of scaffolding commonly found in unmodified native-speaker input. The autonomous nature of the task exacerbated these challenges, necessitating that learners self-regulate in the absence of direct instructional support. The following table categorizes participants' reflections according to their reported listening challenges and assessments of tone, pacing, and accentual features, thereby illustrating the distribution and nature of these difficulties.

Table 1. Reflections on Listening Comprehension Challenges

Main Challenges Reported	Tone/Pacing/Accent Observations
Video long, fast speech, needed focus	Spoke quickly, accented tone
Fast pace, mixed language, unclear articulation	Unfamiliar accent and fast pace affected comprehension
British accent and fast delivery	Accent made decoding difficult
Complex content, rapid delivery	Enthusiastic tone but quick pace
Length induced boredom, accent required effort	Pacing and accent were engaging but challenging

Learners faced major obstacles when interacting with authentic English vodcasts, primarily due to the intricacies of natural language, rapid delivery, unfamiliar accents, and listening fatigue. The issues were documented in both the written reflections of the Vodcast Analysis Templates and the spoken Oral Response Recordings. The table above organizes the barriers identified by learners into five primary domains of difficulty.

Data show the primary challenge was related to the rapid delivery and accented speech, which created immediate decoding difficulties for novice EFL learners. Participants frequently encountered difficulties in processing the rapid tempo alongside region-specific accents. Participant 3 noted, "The first is an unfamiliar accent; the speaker was British and talked very quickly," emphasizing the dual challenge of rapid speech and phonological unfamiliarity. Participant 1 noted, "The speaker spoke a bit quickly but I could understand most of it after repeating some parts," suggesting that comprehension frequently necessitated multiple times of listening, which could hinder learning process and required learners to do extra effort.

It was noticed that difficulty was also influenced by speech fluency and the absence of pauses. The vodcasts contained authentic pacing with minimal intentional breaks, in contrast to textbook recordings or graded materials. This led to

learners overlooking essential points within the vodcasts or experiencing feelings of overwhelmed. Participant 2 noted, "At times the speaker spoke so quickly that I missed the meaning and had to keep going back," a sentiment shared by others who required replaying segments to maintain comprehension.

The theme of video duration and cognitive fatigue was also notably highlighted to present challenge. Multiple learners reported that extended vodcasts increased the challenge of sustaining attention, particularly when the content was not readily understandable. Participant 4 articulated this challenge clearly: "The video was lengthy and the speaker spoke rapidly." Considering the participants' beginner level, frequent pauses were necessary to maintain focus. Otherwise, the physical and mental effort needed to interact with prolonged authentic input led to diminished stamina and intermittent disengagement.

These barriers, while obstructing immediate understanding, frequently acted as catalysts for deeper cognitive engagement. Learners developed a heightened awareness of the linguistic and auditory factors that hindered comprehension and began to express these in their reflections. This self-awareness established the basis for the development of strategic behaviors, which are discussed in the following theme.

Strategic Responses to Listening Difficulty

Aside from experiencing various comprehension challenges during vodcast-based listening tasks, learners also demonstrated several self-directed strategies to overcome the issues. The strategic responses demonstrate efforts to address the linguistic demands of authentic input and indicate an increase in learner agency and control over the listening process. The independent nature of the vodcast tasks necessitated that learners engage in self-monitoring, self-correction, and maintain their own initiative for sustained engagement. Table 2 classifies the categorized strategies utilized by learners, as derived from their written reflections in the Vodcast Analysis Templates and supported by their oral response recordings.

Table 2. Categorization of Strategic Listening Responses

Strategic Response Category	Sources	Topics Cover
Pausing and Segment Replay	P2, P7, P9, P17, P20, P22	Horror, Crime, Self-Love, Mental Health, Positivity
Repetition and Intensive Listening	P14, P21	Future Technology, Documentary

Note-Taking and Focused Listening	P1, P3, P5, P6, P8, P10, P12, P13, P15, P16, P18, P19	Money, Britpop, Advice, Daily Conversation
Subtitles and Repeated Listening	P4, P11	Video Games, Self-Growth
General Strategic Listening	P23, P24, P25	Health, Self-Development, Life Motivation

Participant reflections were analyzed, revealing a hierarchy of strategies that ranged from basic adjustments, such as pausing, to more cognitively demanding behaviors, including note-taking and summary synthesis. The predominant strategy reported was pausing and segment replay, utilized by learners to adjust the pace of speech within the input and facilitate second attempts at decoding intricate segments. Most learners facing this challenge frequently tended to use the pause button in instances of confusion or information overload. Participant 2 conveyed, "I often had to pause the vodcast to catch what was said and then continued when I was ready," indicating this method as an effective strategy for self-regulation.

The use of repetition and intensive listening was observed as well, as learners reported the need to rewatch or replay specific segments multiple times to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the content. Participant 21 noted, "I had to rewatch many times, especially when the speaker used difficult words or spoke too quickly," indicating a repetitive process of understanding that required sustained effort.

Students also indicated that note-taking and attentive listening serve as effective strategies for enhancing retention and minimizing cognitive overload. Participants reported recording keywords, phrases, and main ideas during the initial or subsequent listening to enhance their understanding. Participant 3 noted, "I wrote down the key terms because they helped me keep track of the main ideas while listening," indicating a strategic method to alleviate working memory load and improve retention.

The use of subtitles appeared to be common strategy, especially among learners facing challenges with unfamiliar accents or pronunciation. Subtitles facilitate the connection between spoken and written English, allowing learners to have better opportunities to associate sounds with meanings. Participant 11 indicated that "subtitles helped me figure out what the speaker meant, especially when the accent was confusing," highlighting the role of multimodal support in improving comprehension.

Meanwhile, a smaller group exhibited general strategic awareness, although they did not identify specific steps. These learners indicated efforts such as "trying their best to stay focused" and "listening more than once," reflecting initial phases of strategic development, albeit not yet fully articulated.

This section indicated that beginner learners can employ complex, autonomous listening strategies when provided with opportunities to engage with real-world input. Their reflections illustrate resilience and the development of strategic competence, which are crucial for long-term language advancement. The implementation of self-directed strategies seemed to mitigate frustration among learners, thus maintaining motivation and improving listening persistence.

Metacognitive Reflection and Awareness

Regarding the metacognitive reflection, which involved actively considering their learning processes, participants recognized instances of comprehension failure, assessed the efficacy of their strategies, and tracked their personal development. The reflections documented in Vodcast Analysis Templates and Oral Response Recordings offered substantial evidence that learners were actively analyzing their listening behaviors in response to challenges. This means that metacognitive engagement is particularly significant for beginner EFL learners, indicating a developing ability for self-regulated learning. Table 3 categorizes participant reflections into various types of metacognitive awareness.

Table 3. Categories of Metacognitive Reflection

Metacognitive Reflection Category	Sources	Topics Covered
Recognition of Comprehension Issues	P1, P8, P10, P11, P13, P14, P15, P16, P19, P23	Money, Movies, Self-Growth, Rewrite Story
Perceived Progress and Reflection on Growth	P3, P24	Britpop, Self-Development
Self-Motivation and Affective Regulation	P5	Life Advice
General Metacognitive Commentary	P2, P4, P6, P7, P9, P12, P17, P18, P20, P21, P22, P25	Horror, Games, Conversation, Crime, Positivity, Tech

The most prevalent metacognitive engagement reported by the participants was the identification of comprehension failures. Students often pinpointed particular instances of comprehension loss and articulated their reactions. Participant 8 stated, "Initially, I did not comprehend the meaning due to the complexity of the language. I paused and rewatched", demonstrating awareness of the problem and the

corrective strategy. Participant 1 noted, "I realized I missed the main point and had to listen again with more focus," indicating internal monitoring and real-time regulation.

Aside from that, reports of growth-oriented reflections were received from a smaller yet notable group, suggesting that these participants perceived progress over time in listening fluency, vocabulary recognition, and self-assurance. Participant 24 stated, "I can now grasp ideas more quickly than before." The statement reflects a developmental trajectory which may potentially lead to reduced dependence on external aids, indicating that subtitles may not be needed at all times. From these learners, it was confirmed that reflection served as both a documentation of challenges and a mechanism for affirming personal growth.

The data, moreover, indicated insights concerning self-motivation and affective regulation, especially among learners facing challenges with lengthy or complex vodcasts. Participant 5 stated, "I felt bored and challenged, but I didn't stop because I wanted to prove I could understand it". Such internal motivational dialogue highlighted maintained effort despite challenges. These instances reveal that metacognition contributes to not only developing strategies but also regulating one's emotional state, which is essential for autonomous learning.

It is also noted that some participants began to form initial reflective thinking which was represented through general metacognitive commentary, although still lacking analytical depth. Nevertheless, this indicated their awareness to employ strategies throughout the listening activities, acknowledging the significance of effort.

The reflections indicate that learners engaged actively in their tasks, monitoring comprehension, adjusting strategies, and evaluating progress. This finding is beneficial for novice learners, as it highlights the potential for early metacognitive development when tasks are designed to promote reflection. These skills facilitate immediate understanding and establish a basis for sustained, autonomous language learning.

Affective Engagement and Motivation

Another aspect that influenced learners' overall experience and persistence was the affective dimension. Throughout the process of listening, learners imbued themselves with emotional responses not only towards the contents but also the process of listening and even how they perceived progress. This theme inspects the influence of interest, enjoyment, motivation, frustration, and personal relevance on learner engagement. Emotional responses, both positive and ambivalent, emerged in written reflections regarding topic selection and satisfaction, as well as in

spontaneous verbal comments recorded in the Oral Response Recordings. Table 4 categorizes the emotional tones present in learners' comments, illustrating a complex interplay of motivation, personal connection, and affective regulation.

Table 4. Categories of Affective Engagement

Affective Engagement Category	Sources	Topics Covered
Topic Relevance and Personal Interest	P1, P2, P3, P9, P17, P22	Money, Horror, Britpop, Crime, Self-Love, Life Advice
Enjoyment and Positive Emotion	P8, P10, P12, P13, P15	Youth development, Entertainment, Music Rivalry
Mixed Emotions and Fatigue	P4, P5, P6, P7, P11	Video Games, Advice, Conversation, Motivation
Motivation and Inspiration	P16, P18, P19, P23, P25	Personal development, Positivity, Self-Improvement
General Affective Engagement	P4, P6, P14, P20, P21, P24,	Self-Growth, Future Tech, Culture, Documentary

In the dataset, learners' affective engagement was primarily influenced by personal relevance and interest in the topic. Participants selected vodcasts according to their interests, fostering emotional investment and intrinsic motivation. Participant 1 stated, "I chose this topic because I'm interested in the relationship between money and happiness," indicating a personal connection that increased engagement and effort. Participant 3 noted, "I like music, and this vodcast helped me understand how rivalry shapes music history," indicating that the relevance of the topic enhanced both cognitive engagement and enjoyment.

The majority of students expressed positive emotional responses regarding their vodcast tasks. Including feelings of enjoyment, curiosity, and satisfaction whenever they found relevant, entertaining materials presented by engaging speakers. Expressions such as "interesting," "fun," "exciting," or "helpful," were all related to the term "enjoyment", which positively influenced their affective factor and motivational enhancer to keep them engaging with challenging tasks.

Nonetheless, reports of ambivalent feelings such as experiences of boredom, mental fatigue, or frustration, particularly in relation to longer vodcasts or more complex material were also noted down from some participants. Participant 4 observed: "The video was lengthy, and at times I felt bored, yet I remained motivated to complete it," indicating a combination of disengagement and commitment. This emotional ambivalence illustrates that learners' motivation came in various forms

which in turn also highlighted the importance of affective regulation to achieve the goals within self-directed learning.

Additionally, certain learners expressed instances of inspiration or empowerment, especially when the vodcast content resonated with their aspirations or values. These instances, though limited, served as significant indicators of profound motivational resonance. Participants reported experiencing encouragement and motivation, expressing a desire for change, particularly after engaging with vodcasts focused on personal growth, mindset, or social themes. This indicates that authentic content serves both as linguistic input and as an affective stimulus, enhancing learners' sense of purpose and identity.

Finally, a broad category of affective engagement was identified in learners who demonstrated emotional involvement without specifying particular feelings or justifications. Although these responses were brief, they confirmed that the emotional aspect of the vodcast experience was evident among most learners.

Discussion

This research investigated the experiences of novice EFL learners utilizing English vodcasts for autonomous listening and organized metacognitive reflection. The study analyzed data from Vodcast Analysis Templates and Oral Response Recordings to identify how learners addressed authentic listening input, navigated comprehension challenges, and engaged on cognitive, metacognitive, and affective levels. The results indicate that novice learners, when provided with reflective scaffolding and content control, are capable of developing strategic autonomy and maintaining engagement with authentic linguistic input. This research enhances the existing literature on digital tools in language learning, specifically addressing the gaps identified by Norte Fernández-Pacheco (2016) and Faramarzi, Tabrizi, and Chalak (2019), who advocate for further investigation into novice learners' interactions with authentic media.

Participants in this study reported challenges in processing spontaneous speech, unfamiliar accents, rapid delivery, and colloquial expressions—issues that have been extensively documented in previous research (Goh, 2000; Newton & Nation, 2020; Yang, 2021). In line with Boonsuk, Ambele, and McKinley (2021), the data confirmed that unfamiliarity with accents, particularly British and American regional varieties, posed a significant barrier to comprehension. These findings underscore the necessity of addressing linguistic variety purposively in listening courses.

Compared to another setting in which learners in more teacher-centered settings, participants in this study addressed challenges through repeated playback, segmentation, and focused attention—behaviors that align with problem-solving strategies identified by Goh and Vandergrift (2021) and facilitated by the capabilities of vodcast technology (Gonulal, 2022; Pinto & Leite, 2020). Students' activities to pause, replay, and revisit vodcasts was found to reduce learning anxiety and enhance their cognitive control, thereby validating the effectiveness of digital platforms for self-regulated learning (Fernandez, Sallan, & Simo, 2015).

A notable aspect from this research features learners' engagement not only in strategic reactions but also metacognitive reflection when dealing with challenges faced in listening segments and employed multiple strategies to overcome them. This process illustrates metacognitive awareness as articulated by Goh and Hu (2014) and further explored by Zeng and Goh (2018). In the absence of explicit strategy instruction from educators, learners demonstrated monitoring, evaluating, and adapting behaviors, suggesting that scaffolded activities can stimulate self-directed strategy use (Bozorgian & Shamsi, 2022; Cross, 2011). Additionally, the findings contest the assumption that metacognitive instruction is appropriate for advanced learners (Vellanki, Mond, Khan, & Nair, 2022) and advocate for its incorporation from the initial phases of listening instruction, particularly when facilitated by tools like reflection templates and oral logs (Madarbakus-Ring, 2024).

Another significant finding was regarding the role of affective engagement. The motivation of learners to continue in the face of challenges was frequently associated with their ability to select vodcast topics that resonated with their personal interests. This design element aligns with autonomous learning theory (Dörnyei, 2020) and emphasizes the importance of emotional relevance in listening tasks (Kemp, 2010). This finding supports Yabukoshi's (2023) assertion that affective resilience is crucial for long-term language development. Learners were not simply fulfilling tasks; they were engaging with them on an emotional level. Emotional responses, including frustration, enjoyment, and satisfaction, directly affect attention, persistence, and strategy use, indicating a complex interaction among affect, cognition, and metacognitive reflection.

Despite these favorable results, several areas of concern were identified. Repetition and the use of subtitles can enhance comprehension; however, excessive reliance on these techniques may lead to superficial processing if not accompanied

by deeper engagement strategies (Yang, 2021). The dependency on replaying without having any organized reflection on the podcast tasks may lead learners to perceive the contents as static rather than as a dynamic. Moreover, particular learners may note down vocabulary yet ignore the connection between lexical learning and overall discourse comprehension. This indicates that future iterations of the reflection activities should provide clearer guidance for learners to relate word-level processing to global meaning. In addition, although oral response recordings facilitated spoken synthesis, the variability in performance indicated inconsistent development of spoken fluency, necessitating additional support for oral articulation. The identified concerns highlight the necessity of refining reflection demands to achieve a balance among comprehension, vocabulary, discourse-level understanding, and speaking development.

The study demonstrates that podcasts serve not merely as delivery platforms but as effective pedagogical environments that promote learner autonomy, strategy internalization, and affective resilience, especially when integrated within structured, reflective frameworks. According to Gonulal (2022) and Shunnar and Altweissi (2022), podcasts provide authentic, multimodal exposure that improves processing and retention among novice learners. This study builds upon their findings by showing that when combined with explicit reflection, podcasts serve not only as tools for input but also as catalysts for learner transformation.

This study underscores the need of creating listening experiences that integrate authentic input, learner autonomy, and guided reflection. Educators ought to implement structured analysis activities and permit topic selection to enhance cognitive, metacognitive, and affective engagement. In this manner, even novice EFL learners—frequently neglected in digital listening studies—can exhibit significant abilities in self-directed learning, strategic application, and reflective development when faced with intricate listening challenges.

Conclusion and Suggestion

This research investigated the listening experiences of novice EFL learners who interacted with English podcasts within a structured, self-directed learning activity based on metacognitive reflection. The findings indicated that learners initially faced difficulties with rapid delivery, unfamiliar accents, and idiomatic expressions. These challenges, however, led to the implementation of strategic listening behaviors,

including segment repetition, focused replays, note-taking, and the use of subtitles. The strategies, while diverse, collectively demonstrated a movement towards self-regulation. Learners' reflections, in both written and spoken forms, demonstrated a rise in metacognitive awareness, encompassing the capacity to identify comprehension failures, assess the efficacy of strategies, and monitor listening progress over time.

The study provides a theoretical contribution to metacognitive listening and self-directed learning research, indicating that metacognitive regulation can meaningfully develop at the novice level when reflection is systematically scaffolded. The findings elucidate the progression of beginners from reactive coping mechanisms, such as reliance on repeated replay and subtitles, to initial forms of strategic control. This transition is evident in their increasing ability to recognize sources of difficulty, rationalize strategy selections, and assess outcomes throughout multiple listening cycles. This study advances metacognitive listening research by highlighting "beginner-appropriate" forms of planning, monitoring, and evaluation that can be documented through structured reflective artifacts. Additionally, it enhances self-directed learning discussions by illustrating how autonomy is exercised through micro-decisions in authentic listening contexts, rather than being viewed as a static learner characteristic.

Several areas of concern require pedagogical focus. Certain learners depended significantly on repetition and subtitles, which may hinder their progression to more profound discourse engagement, thereby restricting inferencing and contextual understanding. Others concentrated specifically on vocabulary acquisition, addressing new words in isolation instead of incorporating them into comprehensive meaning-making processes. Variability in the quality of oral responses indicates an uneven development of spoken synthesis skills, highlighting the necessity for more targeted scaffolding in oral articulation and performance reflection. Future research should investigate the evolution of these practices across diverse learner profiles and over extended timeframes, specifically assessing whether gradual scaffold withdrawal facilitates the transition from surface-level aids to discourse-level comprehension and the establishment of more stable self-directed listening routines.

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