
Perceived Benefits and Challenges of Using Note-Taking in Intensive Listening among University Students

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Abstract

One of the best strategies to support listening comprehension is note-taking strategy. In this study, students' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of using note-taking strategies were explored especially in Intensive Listening class. A mixed-methods approach was used involving 28 first-semester students in the English Language Education Department at the University of Bengkulu. Quantitative data were collected through a Likert-scale questionnaire adapted from Dunkel and Davy (1989) which consist of 19 questions in 3 subparts, while qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews. Findings of the study indicate that students view note-taking positively, as it helps them capture main ideas, organize information, reduce cognitive load, and increase focus during listening activities. Students also believe that note-taking strategy improves their performance on listening tasks and exams. However, challenges such as limited English proficiency, difficulty multitasking while listening, and a lack of effective note-taking techniques were identified. This study demonstrates the need for explicit instruction in note-taking strategies to maximize their effectiveness in Intensive Listening classes.

Keywords: *Note-taking, Intensive listening, Listening comprehension, Students' perceptions*

Introduction

Listening is a receptive skill. We need listening skill to understand a process of spoken messages. Many experts argue that listening is the first skill needed to develop other language skills such as speaking, reading, and writing (Satria, 2017; Oktaviani, 2018; Rosdia, 2014). Listening is also not merely hearing, but involves the active processing of information received through the auditory sense. Listening requires focus as a complex cognitive and linguistic skill, meaning comprehension, and active engagement in the process of constructing interpretations of spoken messages (Wolvin, 2010; Rost, 2002).

In EFL classroom practices, listening skills often receive less attention compared to other language skills. Many students face various obstacles when engaging in listening activities, such as difficulties in understanding native speakers' pronunciation, limited vocabulary mastery, distractions from the learning environment, and the speed of spoken delivery (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011; Sulistyo et al., 2023). Listening classes are also considered boring because students tend to struggle to understand and capture information from the audio they listen to. In addition, the density of information presented in listening audio often overwhelms students in remembering and interpreting the information obtained. These limitations can hinder the comprehension of important information delivered orally, especially in academic contexts such as lectures, oral explanations from lecturers, or audio materials used in learning. The difficulties experienced by students in developing listening skills create a substantial gap in language learning, as they may hesitate to further develop skills that they find difficult to fully understand. As an effort to overcome the general challenges that arise in listening classes, various learning strategies have been developed, particularly to improve students' listening skills and comprehension (Gökmen, 2022), especially for listening classes.

Strategies in listening classes are techniques or actions aimed at facilitating students' understanding and recall of information obtained during the listening process. These strategies can be categorized based on how students process the information they receive by relating it to background knowledge, context or subject situation, text type, and linguistic background of the information in order to construct meaning and predict what will occur next (Episiasi et al., 2025). One of these strategies is note-taking. Note-taking has been recognized as an important technique that supports active information processing and enhances students' memory and comprehension of the material they listen to (Al-Ghazo, 2023; Aydın, 2022). Note-taking is included as part of memorization activities and the formation of internal memory because it can reduce the cognitive load of memorizing information and increase the amount of information that can be obtained. Through note-taking, individuals can store complete information without fear of missing important points.

In the context of academic listening, particularly in EFL classes, note-taking helps students capture main information, reorganize key ideas, and review materials for long-term learning purposes. Note-taking skills not only support learning activities but also train students to focus and think critically about orally delivered information. By developing the ability to take notes while listening, students can overcome challenges in understanding and remembering every word (Gökmen et al., 2024).

Not all students are able to perform note-taking effectively although it has many benefits. It is because many of them are not yet familiar with efficient note-taking techniques such as the Cornell method, mind mapping, or selective note-taking. Students tend to rely on materials provided by lecturers in class without feeling the need to create their own notes (Sailah et al., 2014). In such conditions, it is important to understand students' perceptions of note-taking strategies in the context of academic listening, both in terms of perceived benefits and the challenges they face. Mastery of practical note-taking skills is crucial in helping students understand and remember information delivered during listening activities. For example, applying techniques such as using keywords, mind maps, and abbreviations in note-taking has proven to be highly valuable in interpreting and retaining the essence of the listened material. These strategies enable students to review their notes and effectively capture important information that might otherwise be missed, thereby improving their comprehension.

Numerous studies have examined the use of note-taking in listening classes and have demonstrated its benefits in supporting comprehension, information retention, and listener focus. However, most of these studies were conducted with intermediate to advanced EFL learners or in academic contexts where students already possessed relatively adequate English proficiency. Meanwhile, first-year university students in English Departments are in a transitional phase because they have just entered an English-medium academic environment with still limited listening abilities. Although note-taking is often assumed to be an effective strategy, research exploring first-semester students' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of using note-taking in intensive listening classes remains very limited, particularly in EFL contexts. Therefore, there is a research gap concerning how university students perceive the use of note-taking and the challenges they encounter when this strategy is applied at the early stage of intensive listening learning. This study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the role of note-taking strategies in supporting students' listening comprehension and to reveal factors that may influence their effectiveness. The results of this study will make an important contribution to the development of more strategic and responsive listening teaching methods that address students' needs.

Research Method

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to investigate students' perceptions of note-taking in academic listening activities. The primary aim of this research is to examine how English major students perceive the effectiveness of note-taking in helping them understand academic listening materials and to identify the difficulties they encounter when engaging in note-taking activities. The data were collected from 28 first-semester students of the English Education Department at UNIB who were enrolled in an Intensive Listening course. Quantitative data were gathered through a closed-ended questionnaire using a Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Participants selected the responses that best reflected their level of agreement with each statement. The questions consist of 19 questions in 3 subparts. It was designed to measure the extent to which students perceive the benefits and challenges of note-taking during academic listening activities and was adapted from Dunkel and Davy (1989). The second stage involved conducting semi-structured interviews with selected participants to further explore the reasons underlying the patterns and perceptions revealed in the survey results. By integrating quantitative and qualitative data, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' note-taking experiences and to offer insights for improving listening instruction in academic contexts.

Results and Discussion

The purpose of this study is to identify and analyse the benefits perceived by students from the use of note-taking strategies in academic listening activities. Based on the questionnaire distributed to the students, students' perceptions of the use of note-taking in listening classes revealed that the statement "I feel note-taking is important" received the highest score of 4.79. This indicates that students are already aware that note-taking in listening lessons is important for capturing the speaker's meaning. Meanwhile, the statement "If I did not have to take exams, I would not take notes" received the lowest score of 3.84. This suggests that although students recognize the importance of note-taking, they have not consistently applied this technique in their daily listening classes, except during examinations.

Regarding students' perceptions of the benefits of using note-taking in listening activities, the majority of students agreed that they were helped by the small notes they used during listening classes to capture information more comprehensively. This statement received a score of 4.46. For other statements related to the benefits of note-taking, students considered it important for organizing the presented material (3.83), and they believed that they would obtain better scores if they took notes during listening examinations (3.96). Meanwhile, students thought that by having their own notes, they no

longer needed to read their textbooks (3.17) because their notes already contained the information they considered important. Therefore, it can be seen that students have a positive perception of the use of note-taking strategies. This finding is in line with Episiasi (2025), who states that note-taking strategies are very important and beneficial because they help retain learning outputs, especially in listening classes.

To identify problems in applying note-taking strategies in intensive listening classes, the statement “I find it difficult to take notes in English when I’m listening to a lecture in English” received a score of 4.46. In addition, students also felt difficulty and distraction when they had to take notes while understanding lecture explanations (3.83), and students felt that they often only scribbled rather than actually taking notes (2.38). Besides these issues, individual students also experienced other problems.

Based on the results of the questionnaire and students’ opinions obtained through the interview process, the majority of students felt that note-taking is important in Intensive Listening classes. This is due to their awareness that it is very difficult to remember and capture all the information they hear without any form of assistance. According to Episiasi et al. (2025), Anggeraini et al. (2024), and Permana and Cunandar (2025), note-taking plays an important role in helping students better understand the material, organize ideas, and develop ideas systematically. Note-taking activities combined with reading skills have been proven to improve overall reading ability and make it easier for students to review learning materials. In addition, students reported that they felt comfortable using note-taking strategies in class, as these strategies helped them remember the information they had learned and improved their comprehension and performance in listening activities.

It is important for students to know how to take notes effectively so that they can be assisted in understanding and remembering the information provided. One example is learning how to transcribe spoken language into written form without writing word for word what is said. This can be done by writing keywords, using mind mapping, or employing abbreviations. According to Siegel (2022), by having notes, individuals can access the material again even after there is no longer any auditory input. Thus, taking notes during listening classes can help students achieve better scores (Berry et al., 2011).

Based on the results, it can be concluded that students are aware that note-taking strategies are important to be applied in Intensive Listening classes. This finding is also consistent with previous studies by Episiasi et al. (2025), Permana et al. (2025), Selvi et al. (2024), and Gökmen et al. (2024), which show that consistent note-taking practices during listening activities contribute to improved performance in listening tasks. These studies emphasize that note-taking functions as a strategy for recording important information or main ideas from audio materials, thereby facilitating listeners’ ability to remember the content they hear.

Conclusions and Suggestions

The purpose of this study is to investigate how university students view the advantages and difficulties of employing note-taking techniques in intensive listening courses. It may be inferred from the questionnaire and interview data that students see taking notes as a helpful tactic in listening classes. The majority of students are aware that taking notes is a crucial tactic that aids in helping them remember the audio they listen to, comprehend the subject matter more thoroughly, and collect key information.

The results show that taking notes throughout the listening process aids students in organizing knowledge, lowering cognitive load, and improving focus. Additionally, students think that taking notes helps them perform better on tests and listening assignments. These findings support earlier research indicating that regular note-taking during listening exercises can improve EFL students' performance and listening comprehension. Furthermore, this study identifies a number of difficulties with note-taking, especially for first-semester students. The primary challenges include poor English ability, trouble understanding the audio content while taking notes, and ignorance of efficient note-taking methods. This condition shows that even while students understand the value of taking notes, they are nevertheless unable to use them to their full potential in Intensive Listening lessons. In order to help students get the most out of taking notes, instructors are urged to give clear instructions on note-taking techniques such using keywords, acronyms, and mind mapping. It is anticipated that future studies will examine the application of organized note-taking instruction and its impact on improving EFL students' listening skills more broadly.

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