

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, the research questions and objectives, the scope and limitations, the significance of the study, and the state of the art that positions this study among previous research.

1.1 Background of the Study

Listening is widely recognized as one of the most essential skills in language learning (Irmawati et al., 2025), particularly in higher education contexts where students are required to process large amounts of spoken information. In university learning environments, listening plays an important role in helping students understand lectures, follow instructions, participate in discussions, take notes, and respond to spoken content effectively (Nguyen, 2022). Therefore, the ability to comprehend spoken English becomes an important factor that supports students' learning process and academic success.

In English language learning, listening instruction is generally developed progressively, beginning with basic listening activities and continuing to more complex listening tasks. At the university level, students are often exposed to various listening activities that require them to process spoken language in real time while interpreting vocabulary, grammar, and meaning (Zhou, 2021). These demands can present significant challenges, and many students in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts continue to experience difficulties in listening comprehension. In a study conducted by Pham and Le (2025) involving English-major students at a private university in Vietnam, learners reported several

challenges, including rapid speech, limited vocabulary, unfamiliar accents, and difficulties in understanding spoken language. Similarly, Hidayah and Gunawan (2025) reported that university-level EFL students encountered listening challenges related to unfamiliar vocabulary, fast speech, technical barriers, and motivational issues including boredom and anxiety. In addition, students may experience difficulties due to environmental factors, including poor-quality recordings, distracting classroom conditions, and limited opportunities to replay materials (Hermida, 2021). These challenges reinforce the idea that listening is considered one of the most difficult skills for many EFL learners.

Besides linguistic and environmental factors, psychological aspects also play an important role in students' listening experiences. One of the most common psychological factors is listening anxiety. Listening anxiety refers to the feeling of tension, worry, or nervousness that learners experience when they are required to understand spoken language in a second or foreign language (Li et al., 2023). In English learning contexts, listening anxiety may occur when students feel uncertain about their ability to understand spoken messages or fear obtaining unsatisfactory results in listening tasks (Liu & Lin, 2025). As a result, listening anxiety may reduce students' concentration, interfere with information processing, and negatively affect their participation in listening activities (Ma'arif et al., 2026). This suggests that listening anxiety can become a significant barrier in English listening activities.

Several previous studies have investigated listening anxiety among EFL learners. For example, Astrid et al. (2024) found that Indonesian undergraduate students experienced listening anxiety due to limited listening skills, lack of focus, mood conditions, and classroom environments. Similarly, Maknun et al. (2023)

reported that EFL college students showed high levels of listening anxiety caused by limited vocabulary, unfamiliar accents, and difficulties in understanding spoken English. Wang and MacIntyre (2021) also found that listening anxiety was negatively related to enjoyment and influenced students' listening experiences. Furthermore, Nasir and Prafitri (2023) found that higher listening anxiety among Indonesian EFL students was associated with lower listening comprehension scores. These findings indicate that anxiety plays an important role in influencing students' listening performance.

Given the influence of listening anxiety on students' listening performance, one factor that has received considerable attention is the format of listening materials used in listening tasks. Listening materials can be presented in different formats, including audio-only and audio-visual materials. Audio-only materials require students to rely entirely on auditory input without visual representation (Bali et al., 2026), which may shape how students perceive and experience listening activities. Research on students' perception has shown that learners actively evaluate their learning experiences based on factors such as clarity, difficulty, and usefulness of materials (Rahayu & Apriyanti, 2017). In particular, how students cognitively process, affectively respond to, and behaviorally engage with listening materials may be associated with their level of listening anxiety.

Although many studies have explored listening anxiety among EFL learners, the existing literature still shows several limitations. Most previous studies have focused on identifying the causes, levels, and effects of listening anxiety on listening performance. For example, Liu and Thondhlana (2015) investigated foreign language listening anxiety among Chinese EFL learners and found that

listening anxiety was significantly related to listening comprehension performance. Similarly, Hidayati et al. (2020) examined listening anxiety among Indonesian university students and reported that more than half of the participants experienced high levels of listening anxiety, mainly due to difficulties in coping with rapid speech and unfamiliar vocabulary. Likewise, Ma'arif et al. (2026) investigated the causes and levels of listening anxiety among Indonesian EFL students and reported that listening anxiety negatively affected students' academic performance. These studies primarily examined listening anxiety in relation to listening comprehension performance and other learning outcomes.

On the other hand, studies investigating students' perceptions of listening materials have generally focused on aspects such as engagement, difficulty, and usefulness of learning materials. For example, Rahayu and Apriyanti (2017) found that students' positive perceptions of listening materials were associated with higher engagement and motivation. Similarly, Sulaiman et al. (2017) reported that students perceived audio-only and video listening assessments differently in terms of clarity, difficulty, and engagement. Despite these findings, limited research has specifically examined the relationship between EFL university students' listening anxiety and their perceptions of audio-only listening materials across cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. This gap is particularly evident in Indonesian higher education contexts, where studies integrating psychological factors and students' perceptions of instructional listening materials remain scarce. Therefore, further investigation is needed to better understand how listening anxiety may be associated with students' perceptions of audio-only listening materials.

Understanding this relationship is important because students' perceptions toward listening material formats may influence their engagement, comprehension, and overall listening experiences. Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between EFL university students' listening anxiety and their perceptions of audio-only materials in English listening activities. By investigating this relationship, the study is expected to provide a better understanding of how psychological factors and instructional materials interact in shaping students' listening experiences.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background discussed previously, the research questions of this study are formulated as follows:

1. What is the relationship between EFL university students' listening anxiety and their perceptions of audio-only listening materials?
2. To what extent are the cognitive, affective, and evaluative dimensions of students' perception associated with listening anxiety?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the research questions above, this study aims to:

1. Identify the relationship between EFL university students' listening anxiety and their perceptions of audio-only listening materials.
2. Identify the dimension of students' perceptions of audio-only materials (cognitive, affective, or behavioral) that has the strongest relationship with listening anxiety.

1.4 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study focuses on investigating the relationship between EFL university students' listening anxiety and their perceptions of audio-only listening materials in English listening contexts. Students' perceptions are analyzed across three dimensions: cognitive (understanding and clarity), affective (interest and engagement), and behavioral (tendency and preference).

The participants of this study are undergraduate students enrolled in the English Language Education Study Program at Universitas Negeri Jakarta who are taking listening for Academic related courses. These students are selected because they have experience engaging with English listening activities and listening materials, including audio-only materials from classroom sources such as recordings, podcasts, and Language Tests tasks.

This study has several limitations. First, the participants are limited to undergraduate students from the English Language Education Study Program at Universitas Negeri Jakarta; therefore, the findings may not be generalizable to students from other academic disciplines, institutions, or educational contexts. Second, this study relies on self-reported data collected through questionnaires to measure listening anxiety and students' perceptions. Consequently, the findings depend on participants' subjective responses and may not fully reflect their actual listening performance or behavior during listening activities. Third, the study focuses specifically on audio-only materials and does not include a comparison with audio-visual materials.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical significance:

1. Theoretically, this study contributes to EFL listening research by examining the relationship between listening anxiety and students' perceptions of audio-only materials. It is also expected to enrich the discussion on how psychological and instructional factors interact in shaping students' listening experiences, particularly in Indonesian higher education contexts.
2. Practically, the findings may assist lecturers in selecting and designing appropriate listening materials for their classes, raise students' awareness of how listening anxiety may affect their perception of learning materials, and highlight the relevance of listening anxiety to students' psychological well-being, given that persistent anxiety in language learning can affect not only academic performance but also students' broader mental health and confidence in the classroom. The findings are also expected to provide a reference for future research related to EFL listening, listening anxiety, and instructional material design.

1.6 State of the Art

Previous studies on listening anxiety in EFL contexts have primarily focused on identifying its causes, levels, and effects on listening performance. Research consistently shows that listening anxiety negatively affects learners' comprehension, concentration, and overall listening achievement (Nasir & Prafitri, 2023; Wang & MacIntyre, 2021). Other studies have identified various contributing

factors, including linguistic difficulties, unfamiliar accents, and environmental distractions (Maknun et al., 2023; Pham & Le, 2025).

In relation to instructional materials, audio-only materials have been found to be more cognitively demanding, as learners must rely solely on auditory input, which may affect their perception of difficulty and usefulness (O'Grady, 2023). Sulaiman et al. (2017) compared students' perceptions of audio-only and video listening assessments and found that students held different views on clarity, difficulty, and engagement depending on the format. Rahayu and Apriyanti (2017) also found that students' positive perceptions of listening materials were associated with higher engagement and motivation.

However, most existing studies examine listening anxiety and students' perceptions of listening materials separately. There is still limited research that integrates these two variables: examining how listening anxiety relates to students' perceptions of audio-only materials across cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions, particularly among EFL university students in Indonesia.

Therefore, this study offers a contribution by examining the relationship between listening anxiety and students' perceptions of audio-only materials, focusing on how psychological and instructional factors interact in shaping students' listening experiences.