



Integrating Environmental Issues in Extensive Listening: Perceptions of EFL Learners

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Abstract: *Listening is an essential aspect of our daily lives, but remains one of the most challenging language skills to master. This study explores the use of metacognitive listening journals with environmental themes in a class teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). The research assesses the effectiveness of listening journals, their incorporation of environmental subjects, and their suitability for educational purposes. The study used quantitative and qualitative approaches, including questionnaires and group interviews. The data analysis involved the utilisation of Likert scale and thematic analysis techniques. While previous research has underscored the importance of extensive listening, there has been limited exploration of the integration of environmental issues in EFL classrooms. Our study addresses this gap by focusing on learners' perceptions of the efficacy of listening journals and the impact of environmental topics on their environmental awareness. The result revealed that most students have a positive perception of the use of listening journals in extensive listening that integrates environmental issues. Moreover, a significant proportion of students demonstrate a desire to engage in proactive measures aimed at safeguarding the environment.*

Keywords: *Environmental; Extensive listening; Listening journal*

INTRODUCTION

Listening is an indispensable skill in our daily lives, being the most frequently employed among the four language skills (Etemadfar et al., 2020; Purnamaningwulan, R.A., 2022). According to Field (2010), listening is the primary manner wherein learners can enhance their understanding of spoken language varieties (p. 334). However, due to its implicit and fleeting nature, listening can be challenging to master, with factors such as the speaker's speaking pace influencing comprehension. Unfortunately, many instructors who teach listening tend to focus on teaching students how to answer comprehension questions rather than analysing their educational needs when selecting listening materials. Traditional listening teaching methods continue to predominate in language classrooms across Asia, including Indonesia (Chang & Millet, 2016; Widodo & Cirocki, 2015; Widodo & Rozak, 2016). One of the approaches to teaching effective listening is through the use of metacognitive elements (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).

In response to this issue, Vandergrift and Goh (2011) explain the metacognitive approach as an alternative way to teach listening that takes into

account the power of students' own thinking (Vandergrift and Goh, 2011). Moreover, this approach allows listeners to reflect on their own learning. In this study, a metacognitive intervention was implemented using listening journals in an extensive listening class. Learners were required to document their listening activities outside of class in these journals. By using listening journals, learners were able to engage in a variety of valuable listening practices by finding accessible audio or video materials to improve their listening skills. Each week, they submitted their reflective journals, sharing their listening experiences and summarising audio content in their own words.

Furthermore, to promote character education in EFL, it is crucial to incorporate values of life into teaching materials. Teachers should design courses that incorporate enriching materials for their students. Environmental issues can be a valuable source of learning in EL classes, aiming to raise students' environmental awareness by examining and critiquing environmental crises and promoting environmental protection. This is particularly important given the urgency of addressing current environmental concerns, such as pollution, waste and deforestation, which require action from the whole educational community.

Previous studies by Reinders and Cho (2010), Renandya (2011), Stephens (2011), and Waring (2008) have emphasised the significance of extensive listening in enhancing students' L2 listening competence, particularly their listening fluency. Additionally, several researchers have analysed the use of listening journals. For example, Lee and Cha (2020) found that EL using a listening log or journal can increase students' self-confidence when speaking with others when they present what they have written in their listening journal. Another study, by Fauzi and Angkasawati (2019), shows the effectiveness of listening journals in enhancing students' listening abilities and comprehension in an Indonesian context. However, no previous studies have investigated the integration of environmental issues with extensive listening in EFL classrooms. To address this gap, this study examines EFL learners' perceptions of listening journals as metacognitive tool for learning EL by integrating environmental issues.

The study concludes by posing the following research questions:

1. What do EFL learners think about the effectiveness of using listening journals in extensive listening classes, the integration of listening journals in extensive listening classes, and the appropriateness of environmental issues as a study material?
2. How does the integration of environmental issues in extensive listening class impact students' environmental awareness?

To answer these research questions, a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches was used to analyse the data. Group interviews provided qualitative insights after questionnaires, which served as the quantitative instrument for data collection.

The potential outcomes of this study include identifying the effectiveness of using listening journals in EL classes, exploring the integration of listening

journals in EL classes, and examining the suitability of environmental issues as a study material. Additionally, the study aims to determine how the integration of environmental issues in EL classes impacts students' environmental awareness.

The remaining structure of the paper will include a literature review on the use of extensive listening and listening journals, the method used in the study, the results and analysis of the data collected, and a discussion and conclusion section.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Extensive Listening

According to Renandya and Farrell (2011), extensive listening includes a variety of enjoyable and simple-to-understand listening activities that give learners a lot of practice opportunities. Therefore, extensive listening could potentially help EFL students improve their listening capabilities by providing them with ample opportunities to listen outside the classroom. Vandergrift and Goh (2012) propose three principles for extensive listening. The first principle emphasises variety, frequency and repetition, encouraging learners to engage with materials of varying difficulty levels and reinforcing their knowledge through repetition. The second principle is structure and guidance, which can be facilitated by the use of technology through selecting relevant podcasts and videos. Although Vandergrift and Goh's (2012) approach does not contain learner journals, earlier research has demonstrated that diary-keeping can help students become more active and reflective learners, increasing their awareness of listening resources (Goh, 1997; Kawachi, 2007) and improving their learning skills (Kemp, 2010). Diary-keeping allows learners to reflect on their experiences, ultimately enhancing their ability to listen independently. Additionally, blogs have proven to be an effective platform for reflective writing on their learning process.

Listening Journal

Diary studies have been used for language acquisition research since the 1970s. Researchers have used a method called diary study, where participants keep a journal of their thoughts and activities (e.g., Alm, 2013; Bailey, 1990; Bigelow & Ranney, 2005; Carson & Longhini, 2002; Chen, 2016; Lotherington, 2007). Diaries can be used to collect introspective knowledge, which involves "the procedure of observing and reporting on one's thoughts, emotions, motives, reasoning process, and mental states" (Nunan & Bailey, 2009, p. 285). Listening journals, also known as diaries or listening logs, represent a type of diary study where students record their activities outside of class and reflect on how those activities can help them enhance their listening abilities (Gilliland, 2015). Similarly, Schmidt (2016) argues that a listening journal could be a book utilised by students to record practices and reflections on their listening experiences. This concept of a listening journal originates from learning journals used in various fields. Journal writing is a valuable tool for connecting subject material and knowledge (Connor-Greene, 2000), fostering creativity and critical self-reflection (O'Connell & Dymont, 2007), and critically evaluating concepts and theories (Bahmani, 2016). Therefore, journal writing is collectively regarded as a beneficial tool for developing critical thinking skills (Moon, 2006; Shaarawy,

2014), significantly in the field of EFL. This view is also supported by Ivone and Renandya, who note: “one of the most typically used evaluation methods in EL is listening journal/diary/log. Journals are beneficial for recording EL activities in addition to learners’ reflection on their listening experience” (Ivone & Renandya 2019, p. 249).

Environmental Education Issues

Environmental education is crucial to society, as all scientific fields are interconnected with the environment. It is essential for students to engage with their communities to work collaboratively to safeguard the environment. Universities should play a crucial role in promoting environmental education by equipping students with the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions and address environmental issues (Daniel Șterbuleac & Ovidiu Toma, 2018). While numerous environmental studies courses and programmes exist, environmental education remains a concern and lacks comprehensive solutions. Given the demand for graduates with strong environmental knowledge and skills, students should engage with decision-makers and potential employers to gain real-world insights into environmental processes. Field-based education, often underestimated, has a significant role to play (Bakker & Howell, 2011; Șterbuleac & Toma, 2020).

In the implementation of teaching EL in the department of English education at UIN Raden Intan Lampung, we as the teaching team for listening subjects have decided to incorporate environmental education issues into the curriculum to align with the institution’s vision and mission of becoming an international reference in integrative-multidisciplinary Islamic science with environmental insight. Topics such as pollution, waste, deforestation, global warming and food safety were introduced to students, who were given freedom to select relevant videos or audio to listen to outside the classroom using various technological platforms like TED Talk and YouTube.

Relevant studies

Previous studies have reported on the use of listening journals. For instance, Chen’s research (2016) finds that Taiwanese students who maintained listening journals experienced improvements in linguistics expertise, listening and writing skills, and self-confidence. Chen (2017) also highlights the role of listening diaries in enhancing metacognitive awareness. Another study, conducted in Indonesia by Purnamaningwulan (2022), explores the impact of listening journals on college students’ critical thinking skills. While various studies have addressed extensive listening and listening journals, the integration of environmental issues into EL classes remains an unexplored area in the literature. This study aims to fill this gap.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

A combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches was used in the data analysis to answer the following research questions. The study used questionnaires and a group interview. Data was collected through quantitative instruments (i.e. questionnaires) and followed by qualitative devices (i.e. a group interview).

Participants

The participants in this research were students on the EL course at the English education department of UIN Raden Intan Lampung. These participants were students enrolled on the EL class for the second semester of the academic year 2022. A total of 74 students voluntarily completed the questionnaire, while 17 participated in a group interview at the end of the semester. The recruitment of these 17 participants was based on two criteria: initially, the individual must have consistently adhered to the deadline for submitting their listening journal, and had to demonstrate a willingness to engage in the study voluntarily. Although the individuals participated in the activity willingly, measures were taken to ensure their comfort and privacy were upheld. The questionnaire aimed to provide an overview of students' beliefs and perceptions concerning the use of listening journals within the EL class, while the group interview was conceived to delve deeper into students' perspectives on the use of listening journals. In terms of research ethics, in this study students were not forced to become participants and we would also maintain their privacy by using a pseudonym or initials only.

Data Collection and Analysis

The participants were requested to answer a Likert-scale questionnaire where responses ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree, adapted from Aldukhayel (2019). This closed-ended questionnaire consisted of 20 items of the question within three main sections: (1) the effectiveness of a listening journal on extensive listening; (2) the integration of a listening journal into the EL class; (3) the suitability of environmental issues as the material of study. A bar chart shows the results visually, presenting participants' answers spread out in terms of percentages. Following the completion of the questionnaire, the participating students were invited to take part in a group interview. This was aimed at complementing the results of the questionnaires, with participants discussing the questionnaire items in detail, so that they could contribute and provide further information and opinions related to the questionnaire. The interview comprised a series of ten questions and was administered via the Zoom platform. The interviews were recorded using digital technology and subsequently transcribed. Following Barkhuizen, Benson and Chick (2014), the collected data for this study underwent thematic analysis and was interpreted narratively.

FINDINGS

The Results of the Questionnaire

The data in this study were gained from a closed-ended questionnaire which consists of three aspects: the effectiveness of a listening journal for learning extensive listening, the integration of a listening journal into an extensive listening class, and the suitability of environmental issues for study material. Group interviews were also administered to strengthen the data from the questionnaire.

Effectiveness of the listening journal for learning extensive listening

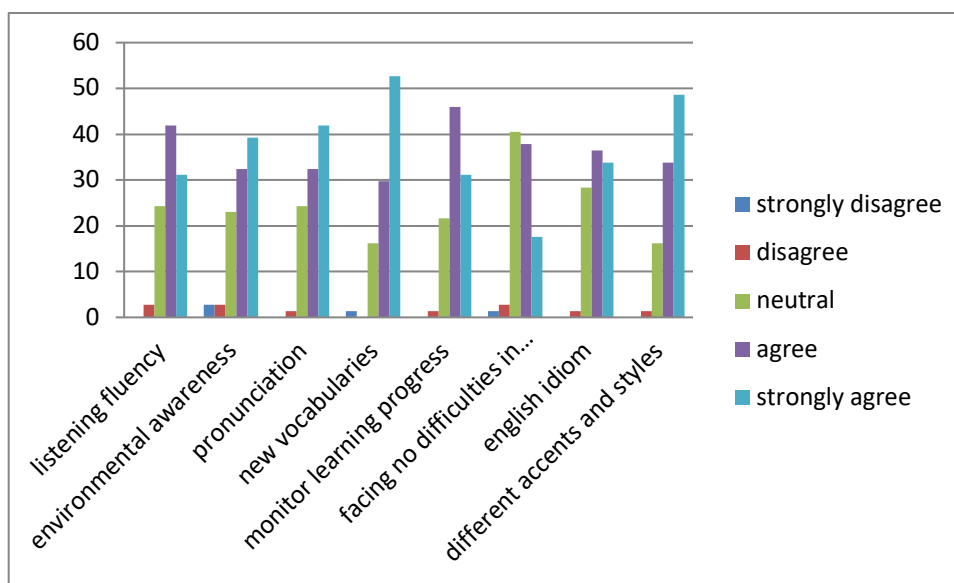


Figure 1. *Students' perception of the effectiveness of the listening journal*

Figure 1 provides an overview of the data from the questionnaire, showing that the majority of the students responded positively towards the effectiveness of listening journals for learning extensive listening. This aspect reveals the students' perceptions of how listening journals contribute to their listening comprehension. There are eight items in the form that represent the effectiveness of a listening journal for learning extensive listening. These include the effectiveness of a listening journal in improving their listening fluency, environmental awareness, pronunciation, vocabulary, language accents, English idioms, and in monitoring learning progress.

The diagram reveals data in which students strongly agree that pursuing the listening journal project in EL class helped them improve listening fluency (31.3%), increase their environmental awareness (39.2%), facilitated them in learning many English collocations, sayings, idioms, humour and sarcasm (33.8%), enabled them to practise their pronunciation (41.9%), and helped them to learn new vocabularies associated with environmental issues (52.7%). Moreover, 45.9% of the students agreed that the listening journal can help them monitor their learning progress.

Integration of Listening Journal into Extensive Listening Class

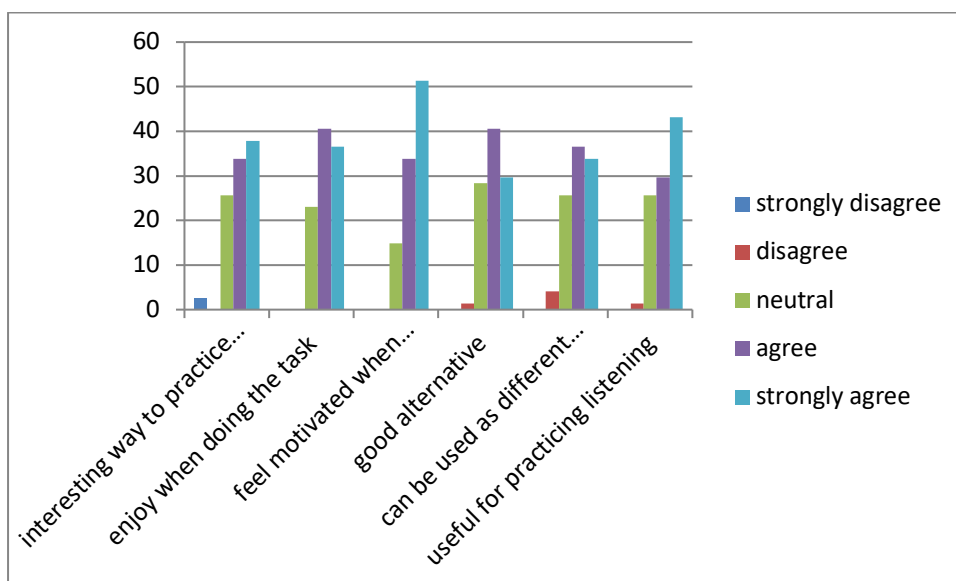


Figure 2. Students' perception of the integration of the listening journal

Figure 2. presents the statistics from the questionnaire concerning the students' feelings about the integration of environmental issues with listening journals and videos in the EL course, as represented by six items of the questionnaire. Based on the data gained from the questionnaire, most of the students' responses were positive in terms of this aspect. Particularly, 37.8% of students strongly agreed that carrying out tasks in a listening journal related to environmental issues was an interesting way to practise listening, and 51.4% strongly agreed that they feel motivated when watching videos on environmental issues. They enjoyed (40.5%) and really enjoyed (36.5%) carrying out listening journal tasks in the EL class concerning environmental problems. Moreover, 40.5% agreed that the listening journal can be good alternative method for practising listening.

The Suitability of Environmental Issues as Material for Study

Figure 3 shows the breakdown of questionnaire results regarding the suitability of environmental issues for study material. This aspect was represented in six items of the questionnaire. The overall response to this question was very positive. In detail, 40.5% of students strongly agreed that making a listening journal project about environmental issues influenced them to pursue green action in their daily lives, while 40.5% strongly agreed that enormously interesting and engaging English language vlogs/videos/podcasts about environmental issues can easily be found.

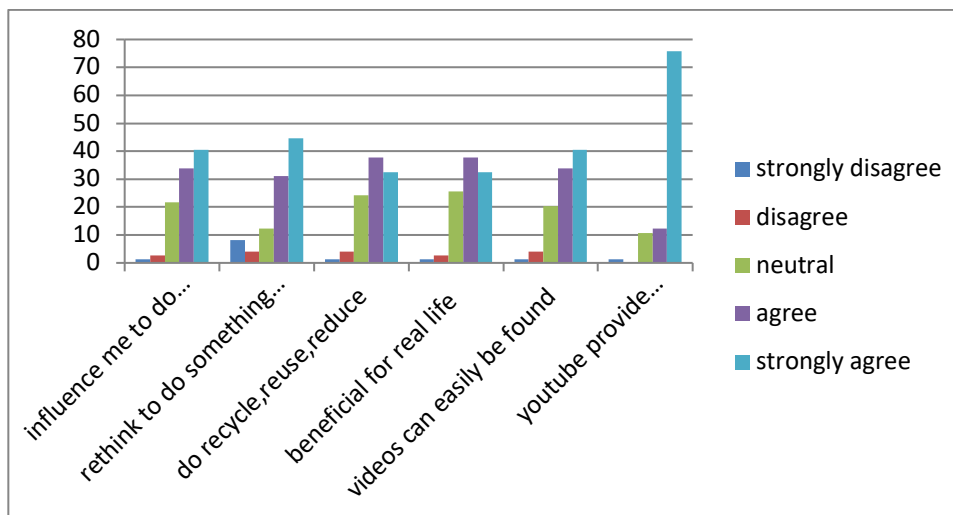


Figure 3. *Students’ perception of the suitability of environmental issues for learning material*

The results of the interview

Group interview was carried out to reveal data about participants’ opinions about experiencing extensive listening class using listening journals to discuss mainly environmental issues. The interview was administered at the last meeting of the extensive listening class via Zoom, with 17 students agreeing to participate by voluntarily expressing their feelings and recounting their experiences related to extensive listening.

When the participants were asked about the effectiveness and what they achieved while working on listening journals as an EL project, most commented that they benefited from extensive listening activities, especially in helping them improve their vocabulary and pronunciation. As a result, they become more confident when talking to people in English. A student additionally claimed that he currently does not really rely on subtitles when he watches a movie: *‘I’m more confident when I talk to people. When I watch a movie, I don’t use subtitles too often. At the same time, I listen to the words from the actors, and do not tend to the subtitle’.*(Sandi). Others commented: *‘After learning extensive listening, I often watch videos in the English language. I now can learn some vocabulary and how to pronounce it’* (Rida); *‘Through extensive listening, I can learn vocabulary and feel more fluent in listening to someone talking in English’* (Devi); *‘I think it’s quite effective because by listening to these online videos we can know how to pronounce in English properly and correctly, and we can also improve speaking skills by listening to the video’* (Ali).

The interview uncovered further information concerning participants’ challenges in joining extensive listening, especially in making the listening journal. For most of the students this was a first experience of operating Google Sites. One primary challenge faced by beginner users is the initial learning, such as how to navigate various features and how to use them effectively: *‘It is*

challenging for me. Before I join this class, I never make a Google site, it is something new for me. It's really fun. Maybe, we find it difficult at first but, we can do it' (Vika). Another challenge lay in the customisation options. Adjusting layouts, colours, fonts, and other design elements can be confusing for those unfamiliar with website design principles. New users might struggle to create visually appealing websites for the first time. Another student commented: 'For me, Google Site is my first experience. Especially for me, I seldom make mind mapping, but now I feel more creative. I think editing or designing something is hard, but after I try, it's easy and I like mind mapping'(Amara). These challenges have been overcome by giving the students a tutorial video on how to operate Google Sites, and most of the students shared information with one another on how to make their own Google website, so that students experiencing difficulties could get insight from others.

An extensive listening journal that focused on discussing environmental issues had a good impact on the students' awareness. They became more conscious of saving and protecting the environment when they talked over the semester about these issues. One participant commented:

'After I listened to the EL class about environmental problems, I immediately followed the procedures to participate in efforts to protect the environment' (Yeni). Other students stated: 'I have the plan to do zero waste. For example in cleaning the make-up, I want to change cotton into a cleansing puff because this little waste will become a big problem someday. Even though I haven't started yet, I already have an intention' (Dona); 'In the EL learning project, several pictures of environmental problems that occur around us are shown. That was enough to influence and make us realise how important to take care of the surrounding environment' (Sista).

Moreover, small steps were additionally taken by some students after they had many discussions about environmental issues in extensive listening classes. They reported new habits related to saving energy, reusing waste, and reducing waste.

'Now I directly unplug the cable of my mobile phone charger right after I finish using it because it can save more energy. I also turn off the electric fan when I don't need that' (Sarah);

'If I do grocery shopping, I try to reduce single-use plastic to reduce waste' (Ayu);

'I now try to sort the waste and reuse the possible one. For example, I don't directly throw the carton but I reuse it as a container' (Dani).

Furthermore, several students expressed their experiences of embedding their environmental awareness by kindly reminding their other family members and friends to save energy and reduce waste.

'Now I concern more on energy-saving in my home. Like when my family members do not turn off the lamp in the morning/afternoon, I will remind them to switch it off' (Nindi);

'I often remind my family not to waste food' (Rendy).

The findings consistently indicate positive student perception of the effectiveness of listening journals, of the integration of environmental issues, and of the suitability of these issues for study materials. However, it is essential to recognise potential constraints and biases that might affect the outcome. The sample group of students who voluntarily chose to contribute to the research might have had a particular interest in environmental issues or possessed a higher level of motivation in listening class.

In this study, it is crucial to acknowledge the limitation associated with the sample size. The study involved 74 participants who completed the questionnaire and 17 participants who were interviewed in depth. While these participants provided valuable insights, the small sample size might restrict the generalisability of the finding to a broader population. It is essential to interpret the finding within the context of limited sample size.

DISCUSSION

Based on the facts amassed from the close-ended questionnaire and group interviews, this research suggests that the students perceived the use of listening journals in extensive listening classes to be effective in improving their listening comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and language accents. Additionally, students had positive feelings towards the integration of listening journals into EL classes and the suitability of environmental issues as material for study. The majority of students found that carrying out tasks in listening journals related to environmental issues to be interesting and enjoyable. Moreover, they perceived the project of a listening journal about environmental issues influenced them in taking green action in their daily lives. During the group interviews, students reported that extensive listening activities helped them improve their vocabulary and pronunciation, which made them more confident when speaking English. Despite initial challenges in making the listening journals, students found the experience enjoyable, and it even helped them develop their creativity.

In pursuing the project, they were encouraged to pay attention to various ELT resources on the internet. The outcomes showed that just about all of the students found that this plan of action helped them to improve their vocabulary and apprehend meaning from many different resources. A listening journal can be used as a vocabulary development tool as a result of students paying attention to new words within the process of taking note of videos/vlogs or podcasts. Once students benefit from a deeper knowledge of vocabulary, they listen back to their texts with greater comprehension talents. Several studies have found positive results from conducting EL in the language class. In this research, the majority of college students agreed that the integration of the listening journal within the EL class may be useful in improving their listening, vocabulary, and other language-associated ability. Several scholars reported that their listening skills improved,

especially their comprehension abilities, and critically gave their opinions and suggestions regarding what they had listened to in podcasts, vlogs or videos. In the same vein, Purnamaningwulan (2022) finds that implementing weekly listening journal assignments might significantly improve students' critical thinking skills. In other words, journal writing activities that are applied with listening activities can facilitate students in finding new information analytically and significantly, developing students' higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) through the stages of analysing, evaluating, and creating. This is confirmed by the findings acquired from students' responses to the implementation of listening journals. Most of the college students' responses indicated that the listening journal was helpful to them not only in developing their CT abilities, but also in increasing their reflective competencies and interest, giving them a better understanding of listening material, enhancing their English competence, and fostering self-discipline and motivation.

Interestingly, in this current study there was also a positive influence on participants' environmental awareness. In integrating a listening journal into an extensive listening class, we asked the students to choose for themselves a podcast, vlog or video that is highly relevant to the environmental issue. In practice, several students chose Ted Talks and YouTube rather than podcasts as sources of material, possibly because several Ted Talks and YouTube videos are relevant to various topics concerning youth and life in general, and can easily be found on the internet.

The journal design used in the extensive listening project was inspired by the guidelines of Vandergrift and Goh (2011). In this case, the listening journal is a metacognitive appliance to guide students by means of listening activities that are carried out independently, and study preparation begins by choosing materials that match the theme determined by the teacher. The environmental themes we discussed in the extensive listening class included pollution, waste, deforestation, food waste and global warming. In this case students needed to act responsibly and use their thinking critically to make choices and analyse information. Every week, they had to report on their listening activities, and also tell what they could learn from the materials in their reflective listening journals. At class meetings, they had to present this to their friends and discuss the material in groups. There were some learning activities in EL class that had to be posted on their Google Sites web pages and reported in Zoom meetings – making a concept map, reflection, listening circle, small group discussion, etc.

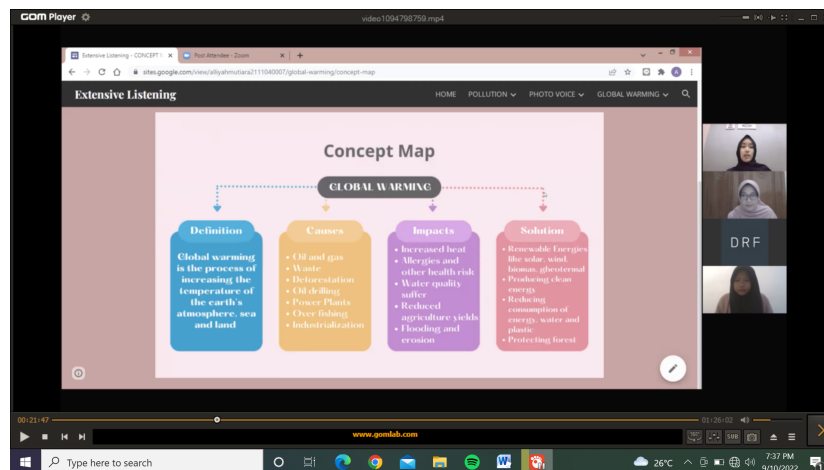


Figure 4. Students present their listening activities on Google Sites

Students were asked to post their listening journal projects on their respective Google Sites accounts. By working on a journal listening project in an extensive listening class, students could listen or watch the material independently. This meant that indirectly through this process they experienced self-directed learning (SDL). SDL is a learning method in which college students study independently, and includes the four metacognitive procedures mentioned earlier: planning, monitoring, problem-solving, and evaluation. By producing a listening journal in an extensive listening class, the students could assess the effort involved in conducting their self-directed learning. This study is in agreement with Hai Yen Vu and Mahsood Shah's (2016) findings which show that self-directed learning can help students to gain new talents, information, and attitudes to improve their work performance. Commenting on SDL in the college setting, Susan Wilcox (1996, p. 167) argues: 'Self-directed learning reflects the traditionally high value that universities have placed on encouraging college students to take obligation for their gaining knowledge of, and also reflects the liberal education value of, lifelong learning'. It is interesting to note that SDL is a basic process of continuous student learning that gives students cognisance of abilities regarding inquiry, research, acquisition of knowledge, expertise, attitudes and values, allowing them to stay efficacious and in a short time able to exchange the world for the better (Barrett, 2014; Breed & Bailey, 2018; du Toit-Brits, 2019; Knowles, Holton and Swanson, 2014). Discussing environmental issues in EL classes gave students a heightened awareness of the importance of protecting the environment, which prompted some to take actions towards this end.

The results of the study consistently demonstrate that students have a good perception of the usefulness of listening journals, the incorporation of environmental issues, and the appropriateness of these issues as study materials. Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge potential limitations and predispositions that could impact the results. The subset of students that willingly participated in the research may have had a specific inclination towards environmental concerns, or demonstrated a heightened level of enthusiasm in the context of listening instruction.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study provide insights into the comprehensive effects of including the listening journal and environmental issue videos. In addition to the enhancement of listening fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and pronunciation, students expressed a positive reception towards the integrated approach, finding it both engaging and encouraging. This means that including topics from different fields, like environmental issues, could help students improve more than one language at the same time, making the learning experience more complete and all-encompassing. This finding is supported by the data, which indicates that 31.1% of students expressed strong agreement regarding the efficacy of listening journals and environmental issues videos in enhancing their listening fluency. Furthermore, it was found that these resources contributed to an increased awareness of environmental concerns among 39.2% of students. Additionally, 41.9% of students reported that these materials assisted them in practising their pronunciation, while 52.7% indicated that they helped in acquiring new vocabulary related to environmental issues.

The study places significant emphasis on the important role that motivation and engagement play in facilitating successful learning outcomes. The positive response from students towards the integrated method suggests that it has substantial benefits on their level of excitement towards the learning process. Integrating environmental issues and the listening journal fostered the students' engagement and inspired them to actively participate and delve further into the subject matter. The findings of the study indicate a favourable influence on students' level of environmental awareness. Exposure to environmental concerns not only has a positive impact on linguistic abilities but also serves to increase students' awareness of environmental challenges. Furthermore, a significant proportion of students have demonstrated a desire to engage in proactive measures aimed at safeguarding the environment.

However, some students faced challenges in using Google Sites for the listening journal and in designing the mind maps. Despite these challenges, they found the experience to be fun and rewarding. Therefore it is recommended that educators provide adequate support and guidance to students when introducing new technologies or tasks.

Overall, the use of listening journals and videos on environmental issues in extensive listening classes can be an effective and engaging approach for improving students' listening skills and environmental awareness. Finally, several important limitations need to be considered. First, the sample size is limited to the context of the university students of the English education department at UIN Raden Intan Lampung, Indonesia. This limitation means that the study result could not be used to generalise to other contexts. It is recommended that researchers carry out further studies in different contexts or language skills, with other focuses of SDL, such as SDL in different age groups or SDL in specific cultural contexts. Considering that the sample used in this study was small, we recommend that future researchers should conduct research with a larger sample.

CONCLUSION

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