



Students' Perceptions of Digital Audio Platforms in Supporting English Language Learning: An EF Context

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-06-11 Revised: 2026-06-26 Accepted: 2026-06-30 Keywords: <i>Digital audio platforms;</i> <i>EFL learning;</i> <i>Learner autonomy;</i> <i>Spotify audiobooks;</i> <i>Students' perceptions</i> DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i1.11767 Corresponding Author: Muhammad Gibran Ramadhan gibranramadhan092@gmail.com Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. Hamka, DKI Jakarta	<i>This study investigates Grade 11 students' perceptions of using digital audio platforms, particularly Spotify audiobooks, to support English language learning in an EFL context. Grounded in Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), the study focuses on learner autonomy, authentic listening exposure, and self-regulated listening strategies. Using a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected through open-ended questionnaires with 31 students, semi-structured interviews with 10 selected participants, and one classroom observation involving 31 students. The findings show that students perceived Spotify audiobooks as useful, flexible, and motivating because they allowed access to English input beyond the classroom and supported self-paced listening. Students also perceived fluent/authentic English audio as helpful for pronunciation awareness, listening familiarity, and vocabulary noticing. However, linguistic and technical barriers, such as speech speed, unfamiliar accents, vocabulary density, internet access, advertisements, and premium limitations, affected their learning experience. Students responded through repeated listening, playback adjustment, lyrics or transcripts, word searches, peer discussion, and preparation before learning. This study contributes to MALL-based EFL listening research by showing how Spotify audiobooks support perceived learning through autonomy, authentic exposure, teacher mediation, and coping strategies.</i>

1. Introduction

The integration of mobile technologies into language education has changed the way students access and engage with English learning materials, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. In traditional classroom practice, listening input is often limited to textbook-based audio and scheduled classroom activities. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) expands this learning space by enabling students to access English input through portable devices, such as smartphones and tablets, beyond the physical classroom (Karakaya & Bozkurt, 2022; Peng et al., 2021). Within this framework, mobile learning supports flexible, learner-centered, and self-directed language practice because students can choose when, where, and how often they engage with learning materials (Jaelani & Adung, 2022; Sutrisna, 2025).

In this study, MALL is understood as the mobile learning environment that enables students to access English input beyond classroom time and place. Learner autonomy refers to students' ability to choose when, where, and how often they engage with listening materials, while self-regulated learning refers to the way students plan, monitor, and adjust strategies when they face difficulties. Authentic listening exposure refers to contact with fluent English audio that contains natural pronunciation, intonation, speech speed, accent variation, and vocabulary use. These concepts are connected because mobile access can support autonomous listening, but students still need self-regulated strategies and teacher guidance to make authentic audio input understandable.

Digital audio platforms are one form of mobile learning resource that can provide students with additional listening exposure. Spotify, which was originally known as a music streaming platform, now offers various audio-rich materials, including songs, podcasts, and audiobooks. Among various digital audio platforms, Spotify audiobooks were selected as the specific focus of this study because they provide authentic spoken English that can be accessed, paused, replayed, and revisited by students during learning. Compared with songs and podcasts, audiobooks generally provide longer and more sustained spoken input, narrative continuity, contextualized vocabulary, and extended listening practice.

This makes audiobook-based learning pedagogically relevant for EFL students, although the format may also create challenges when speech is fast, vocabulary is dense, or accents are unfamiliar. Audio-based materials are relevant for EFL learners because repeated listening can help students become more familiar with pronunciation, intonation, vocabulary, and natural speech patterns (Li, 2023; Sihombing & Simanjuntak, 2023). Research on digital audio platform-based learning also indicates that audio content can support listening engagement and vocabulary noticing when students are able to control the materials (Butar & Katemba, 2023; Hamsia & Roifah, 2023).

Recent studies have examined Spotify songs, podcasts, and general listening activities. Several studies have focused on Spotify-based listening activities through songs or podcasts (Aprilina et al., 2024; Marsela et al., 2024), while others have discussed podcast-based listening comprehension and the benefits or challenges of using Spotify for English listening instruction (Masbirorotni et al., 2023; Meisa, 2023). These studies are useful because they show that Spotify and podcast-based materials can support listening engagement; however, many of them emphasize songs, podcasts, general perceptions, or learning outcomes rather than how senior high school students experience and manage audiobook-based listening.

Therefore, this study extends previous work by focusing on Grade 11 students' perceptions of Spotify audiobooks as a selected digital audio platform and by using questionnaire, interview, and observation data to examine both perceived support and learning difficulties.

The gap addressed in this study is the limited explanation of students' lived experiences when using Spotify audiobooks as a digital audio platform for English learning, especially in relation to learner autonomy, authentic exposure, technical and cognitive barriers, and students' coping strategies. Rather than measuring learning outcomes through tests, this study explores how students perceive the usefulness and flexibility of Spotify audiobooks and how they manage the challenges of authentic audio input. This focus is important because students' perceptions and learning experiences can reveal whether digital audio platforms are perceived as supportive for autonomous listening practice, comfortable learning, and meaningful English exposure beyond classroom instruction.

This research aims to investigate Grade 11 students at a public senior high school in Jakarta. At this educational level, students are expected to develop more independent learning habits while still needing teacher guidance in selecting appropriate materials and using effective listening strategies. Therefore, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do students perceive the use of digital audio platforms for English language learning within the framework of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL)?
2. What learning experiences shape students' perceptions of using digital audio platforms for English language learning?

By answering these questions, this study is expected to contribute to MALL and EFL literature by showing how audiobook-based listening within Spotify can support learner autonomy, authentic exposure, and self-regulated strategies. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on Spotify audiobooks in a senior high school EFL context, its triangulated qualitative design, and its attention to students' coping strategies when facing authentic listening difficulties. Practically, the findings may help EFL teachers integrate digital audio platforms as supplementary listening materials while anticipating the technical and comprehension-related challenges faced by students.

Theoretical orientation

MALL provides the broader pedagogical environment for this study because it explains how mobile devices extend language learning beyond classroom time and place. Through MALL, students can access materials repeatedly, control their learning pace, and practice English independently (Jaelani & Adung, 2022; Sutrisna, 2025). In this study, the MALL affordances of portability, accessibility, and replayability are connected to learner autonomy because students can decide when and how they engage with audio input.

Within this MALL environment, digital audio platforms function as mobile resources that provide authentic listening input. Unlike textbook-based audio that is often simplified, digital audio materials can expose students to more natural pronunciation, intonation, accents, and vocabulary use (Li, 2023; Sihombing & Simanjuntak, 2023). Digital audio platforms, particularly Spotify audiobooks, are relevant to receptive skill development because they provide extended spoken input in meaningful contexts and allow students to pause, replay, and revisit audio materials. However, authentic exposure can also produce cognitive load when speech speed, accent variation, and vocabulary density exceed students' listening readiness.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Study



The conceptual model illustrates that digital audio platforms are examined as learning resources within the MALL environment, with Spotify audiobooks serving as the selected platform in this study. The relationship can be summarized as follows: MALL affordances provide flexible access to Spotify audiobooks; this access shapes students' perceptions of usefulness, flexibility, motivation, and practicality; students then experience authentic exposure, challenges, and coping strategies; and these experiences lead to perceived EFL learning support. These connected elements explain how digital audio platforms may support EFL learning when students are guided to manage both technical and comprehension-related barriers.

2. Method

Research design and participants

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design with methodological triangulation to explore Grade 11 students' perceptions of digital audio platforms for English learning, with attention to the learning experiences that shaped those perceptions. A qualitative descriptive approach was appropriate because the study aimed to present students' experiences in a clear, direct, and natural way based on their own responses. The organization and interpretation of the data followed thematic analysis principles, especially systematic familiarization, coding, theme generation, theme review, and theme definition.

The research was conducted at a public senior high school in Jakarta and involved Grade 11 students. This level was selected because Grade 11 students are in a transitional stage where they are expected to become more independent learners while continuing to develop their English skills. The participants were selected through purposive sampling because the study required students who had experience using Spotify-based audio materials, particularly Spotify audiobooks, for English learning. Students' prior experience was verified through initial questionnaire responses and then confirmed during interview selection.

The participants were Grade 11 students at a public senior high school in Jakarta who had access to a smartphone or digital device and had experience using Spotify-based audio materials, particularly Spotify audiobooks, or comparable digital audio materials for English learning. Because some students also mentioned other platforms, these responses were treated as contextual comparisons, while the analysis foregrounded Spotify audiobooks as the selected digital audio platform. The participants were also chosen based on their willingness to share their learning experiences through questionnaire responses, interviews, and classroom observation. A total of 31 students participated in the open-ended questionnaire. From these participants, 10 students were selected for in-depth semi-structured interviews because their questionnaire responses provided relevant, varied, and meaningful information related to the research focus.

Meanwhile, the classroom observation involved 31 students during the observed learning session. The number of participants was considered sufficient for this qualitative descriptive study because the aim was not statistical generalization but meaningful insight into repeated patterns of perception and experience. The 31 questionnaire responses provided broad thematic tendencies, the 10 interviews allowed deeper exploration of students' reasons and strategies, and the observation data helped confirm whether students' reported experiences were visible in classroom behavior.

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Demographic Profile	Category	Frequency (n=31)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	20	64.5%
	Male	11	35.5%
Age	16 years old	2	6.5%
	17 years old	20	64.5%
	18 years old	9	29.0%
Grade Level	Grade 11	31	100%

Data collection

To build a credible dataset, this study used three data collection instruments: open-ended questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and field observations. The instruments were developed from the research questions, the MALL framework, and an instrument mapping that was reviewed by the academic advisor for content relevance and clarity. The open-ended questionnaires were distributed through Google Forms to 31 students.

Sample questionnaire items asked students whether digital audio platforms helped their English learning, which features supported learning, what challenges they experienced, and how they handled those challenges. The questionnaire items were designed to gather broad responses about students' learning experiences, perceived usefulness, flexibility, motivation, learning autonomy, listening support, vocabulary development, challenges, and coping strategies when using digital audio platforms, particularly Spotify audiobooks.

After the questionnaire data were collected, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 selected participants. Each interview lasted approximately 8-15 minutes and was used to explore the questionnaire responses in greater depth, especially students' reasons for using digital audio platforms, the benefits they perceived, the obstacles they faced, and the strategies they used when they had difficulty understanding the audio. Sample interview questions included students' reasons for choosing the platform, their comparison between digital audio learning and classroom learning, their perceived listening or pronunciation support, and their strategies when audio speed or accent was difficult to understand.

Field observations were also conducted once during one English learning session at a public senior high school in Jakarta. A real-time observation sheet was used to document students' visible engagement, behavioral responses, interaction with the audio materials, peer discussion, and navigation habits during the activity. Because advertisements and access limitations appeared in the findings, the study also noted that some students used free Spotify access while others referred to premium access as a possible solution.

All participant identities were treated confidentially by using participant codes such as P1, P2, and P3 in the reporting of interview excerpts. The research was conducted after school permission was obtained, participation was voluntary, and students were informed that their responses would be used only for academic purposes.

Data analysis and trustworthiness

The data were analyzed through thematic analysis. First, the researcher familiarized himself with the data by reading the questionnaire responses, interview transcripts, and observation notes several times. Second, initial codes were created by identifying repeated meanings related to students' perceptions, benefits, challenges, and coping strategies. The interview transcripts were coded line by line with the assistance of NVivo 12, while the open-ended questionnaire responses were coded thematically and summarized in Excel to calculate descriptive theme frequency.

In the Excel coding matrix, each participant's response was assigned a value of 1 when it reflected a particular code and 0 when it did not. The frequency of each code was calculated using the SUM function, and the percentage was obtained by dividing the frequency by the total number of questionnaire participants ($n = 31$). Because the questionnaire was open-ended, one response could be coded into more than one theme; therefore, the frequency counts represent the number of participants whose responses reflected each theme, rather than mutually exclusive categories.

These percentages were used only to describe recurring tendencies in the qualitative questionnaire data and were not treated as inferential quantitative results. Third, similar codes were grouped into broader themes, such as positive reception and flexibility, authentic exposure, experiential hurdles, and coping strategies. Fourth, the themes were reviewed by comparing questionnaire trends, interview excerpts, and observation notes. Finally, each theme was defined and linked back to the research questions and theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Naeem et al., 2023).

Several strategies were used to strengthen the trustworthiness of the study. Credibility was supported through methodological triangulation by comparing questionnaire responses, interview data, and classroom observation notes. Member checking was conducted informally by confirming selected interview meanings with participants to ensure that their responses were not misinterpreted. Dependability was addressed by documenting the data collection process, coding steps, and theme development.

Coding consistency was strengthened by rechecking the coded questionnaire responses and comparing them with interview and observation evidence; unclear responses were reviewed again before finalizing the theme frequency. Confirmability was supported by keeping the analysis grounded in participants' responses and observation notes, while the use of direct quotations helped show the connection between the data and the interpretation.

3. Result

The findings derived from the triangulated data provide a comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions of digital audio platforms for English learning, including the experiences, challenges, and strategies that shaped those perceptions. The questionnaire data provided broad descriptive tendencies, the interviews explained students' reasons and experiences in more detail, and the observation data showed visible classroom behavior during the audio-based learning activity. The key findings aligned with the research questions are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Thematic Triangulation Matrix

Research Question (RQ)	Overarching Theme	Key Findings (Triangulated Evidence)
RQ 1: Perceptions of MALL	Positive Reception and Flexibility	Questionnaire coding shows perceived usefulness (30/31; 96.8%) and flexibility/accessibility (27/31; 87.1%). Interview data indicate that students valued learning anywhere and at their own pace, while observation showed relaxed and engaged classroom behavior.
RQ 2: Experiences Shaping Perceptions	Authentic Exposure	Fluent/authentic English audio support was reported by 29/31 students (93.5%), and vocabulary support by 29/31 students (93.5%). Interviews and observations showed pronunciation imitation, repeated listening, and visual-audio synchronization.
RQ 2: Experiences Shaping Perceptions	Experiential Hurdles	Language-related barriers appeared in 22/31 responses (71.0%), while technical/access-related issues appeared in 24/31 responses (77.4%). Interview excerpts supported issues of speech speed, accent, internet connection, and advertisements.
RQ 2: Experiences Shaping Perceptions	Coping Strategies	Students responded through searching word meanings or seeking assistance (12/31; 38.7%), repeated listening (11/31; 35.5%), subtitles/transcripts/lyrics (10/31; 32.3%), playback speed adjustment (5/31; 16.1%), and internet/offline preparation (6/31; 19.4%).

Students' Perceptions of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning

The triangulated findings indicate that students generally perceived Spotify audiobooks, as a selected digital audio platform, as useful and flexible learning resources for English learning. Questionnaire coding shows that 30 out of 31 students (96.8%) perceived digital audio learning as useful, while 27 out of 31 students (87.1%) explicitly mentioned flexibility or accessibility. These patterns suggest that students valued the possibility of listening beyond classroom time, repeating materials, and accessing English input during free time or travel.

The interviews and observations help explain why students perceived the platform positively. Participant P3 explained that Spotify-based audio materials could be used anywhere, including at home or while traveling, while P1 emphasized that digital audio could be replayed repeatedly until the material became easier to understand. The classroom observation also showed that students appeared more relaxed during the audio activity, as seen from their willingness to listen, follow the audio, and respond to the material.

Authentic Exposure and Skill Support

Students' learning experiences were shaped by exposure to authentic spoken English. The questionnaire responses show that 29 out of 31 students (93.5%) reported that fluent or authentic English audio helped them become more familiar with pronunciation, intonation, accents, or listening practice. During the observation, some students were seen mouthing words and imitating pronunciation while listening to the audio, indicating that

authentic audio was not experienced passively. This finding refers to pronunciation awareness and listening familiarity rather than objective measurement of language development.

The data further indicate that Spotify audiobooks supported students' vocabulary noticing. In the questionnaire, 29 out of 31 students (93.5%) stated that audio-based learning helped them encounter or understand new vocabulary. P9 explained, "The full English content improves my listening skills in English class, and from there, my vocabulary increases little by little." P6 also described becoming more familiar with pronunciation and vocabulary after repeatedly listening to English learning media through Spotify. These findings should not be interpreted as proof of direct causal improvement because the study did not use pre-test and post-test data. Rather, they show that students perceived repeated exposure to English audio as helpful for recognizing new words and understanding spoken English.

Challenges and Coping Strategies

Despite these positive experiences, students also encountered cognitive and technical challenges. Language-related barriers appeared in 22 out of 31 questionnaire responses (71.0%). Students mentioned fast speech, unfamiliar accents, unclear pronunciation, difficult vocabulary, and slang. Technical or access-related issues appeared in 24 out of 31 questionnaire responses (77.4%), including unstable internet connection, limited data, lagging devices, unclear audio, and advertisements.

The coping strategies used by students became one of the strongest findings of the study because they show how learners regulated their own listening process. The questionnaire coding indicates that students searched for word meanings or sought assistance (12/31; 38.7%), replayed audio (11/31; 35.5%), used subtitles, transcripts, or lyrics (10/31; 32.3%), adjusted playback speed (5/31; 16.1%), and prepared internet access or offline materials (6/31; 19.4%). These strategies can be grouped into cognitive strategies such as checking word meanings, metacognitive strategies such as replaying and slowing playback speed, resource-management strategies such as using lyrics or transcripts and asking peers, and technical strategies such as preparing internet access or offline materials. Because Spotify audiobooks do not always provide built-in transcripts in the same way as songs provide lyrics, students' use of lyrics or transcripts refers to available text support from the platform, linked materials, or other supporting resources used together with the audio.

4. Discussion

The findings show that students' positive perceptions were closely related to the MALL affordances of portability, flexibility, and self-paced access. Digital audio platforms allowed students to control when, where, and how often they listened to English input. This control reflects learner autonomy because students did not only receive listening materials from the teacher, but also managed their own exposure, repetition, and learning pace. However, autonomy should not be understood as the absence of teacher support; students with weaker self-regulation may need clearer guidance in choosing suitable audio, setting listening goals, and selecting strategies.

The findings also suggest that digital audio platforms can create a more comfortable listening environment when students are allowed to replay and process the audio at their own pace. This study did not directly measure anxiety; therefore, the finding is better interpreted as perceived comfort rather than evidence of reduced anxiety. Authentic audio exposure helped students notice pronunciation, intonation, vocabulary, and spoken language features, which supports previous studies on audiobooks and digital audio

learning (Arockiasamy et al., 2025; Sihombing & Simanjuntak, 2023). However, similar technical and comprehension-related challenges have also been reported in previous studies on audiobook and podcast-based listening, particularly in relation to speech speed, unfamiliar accents, vocabulary density, and technical access (Selviani & Ardiana, 2025; Widodo & Nugroho, 2024). This suggests that the challenges experienced by the participants were not only related to the platform itself, but also to the nature of authentic audio input and students' varying levels of listening readiness.

The coping strategies used by students indicate self-regulated learning because students planned, monitored, and adjusted their listening practices in response to difficulties. Viewed through (Zimmerman, 2002) self-regulated learning framework, preparing internet access and selecting suitable materials reflect the forethought phase; replaying audio, slowing playback speed, checking transcripts, and searching word meanings reflect performance control; and evaluating whether the audio was understandable reflects self-reflection. Replaying audio, checking word meanings, using transcripts, slowing playback speed, and preparing internet access were not merely problem-solving actions; they represented how students actively shaped their learning process. These strategies are consistent with previous findings that replaying audio, using transcripts, checking vocabulary, and adjusting playback speed can help EFL learners manage listening difficulties (A'R et al., 2025; Samudro et al., 2025; Selviani & Ardiana, 2025).

Theoretically, this study contributes to MALL and EFL literature by showing how Spotify audiobooks, as a form of digital audio platform, can support learner autonomy, authentic exposure, and self-regulated listening strategies in EFL learning. In this study, Spotify audiobooks functioned as a selected digital audio platform that connected authentic exposure, learner autonomy, and self-regulated listening strategies. At the same time, the findings show that authentic audio can produce cognitive overload when speech speed is too fast, vocabulary is dense, or accents are unfamiliar.

Access inequality also needs attention because mobile data cost, device quality, internet stability, advertisements, and premium access can shape whether students experience the platform as supportive or disruptive. Pedagogically, EFL teachers can integrate digital audio platforms as supplementary listening materials, but the integration should be mediated. Teachers may help students choose materials that match their proficiency level, provide pre-listening vocabulary support, encourage the use of transcripts or lyrics when available, and teach listening strategies such as replaying, slowing playback speed, and checking unfamiliar words.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, the participants were limited to Grade 11 students at one public senior high school in Jakarta, so the findings cannot be generalized to all EFL learners. Second, the data relied mainly on students' self-reported perceptions, supported by interviews and one classroom observation. Third, the study did not include an objective listening or vocabulary test, so the findings should be interpreted as perceived support rather than measured learning gains. Fourth, the study focused on Spotify audiobooks as a selected digital audio platform, while students' previous experiences with other digital or audio-visual platforms appeared only as contextual comparison.

Future research may involve a larger and more varied group of participants, conduct repeated observations, compare audiobook-based learning with podcasts or songs, or use mixed-methods and quasi-experimental designs to examine whether perceived benefits are reflected in measurable listening or vocabulary development.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that Grade 11 students generally perceived digital audio platforms, particularly Spotify audiobooks, as useful and flexible tools for English language learning. Students valued the platform because it allowed them to access English input beyond the classroom, learn at their own pace, and experience a more comfortable listening environment. Students also perceived exposure to fluent or authentic English audio as helpful for pronunciation awareness, listening familiarity, and vocabulary noticing.

The learning experience also involved cognitive barriers, such as fast speech, unfamiliar accents, difficult vocabulary, unclear pronunciation, and slang, as well as technical or access-related barriers, including unstable internet connection, limited data, lagging devices, unclear audio, advertisements, and premium access. To manage these challenges, students used coping strategies such as searching for word meanings, replaying audio, slowing playback speed, using lyrics or transcripts when available, discussing meanings with peers, and preparing materials before learning.

These findings indicate that Spotify audiobooks, as a digital audio platform, can support autonomous and authentic EFL listening practice when teachers provide appropriate guidance in content selection, listening strategies, and technical preparation. The study contributes to EFL listening research by showing that students' perceptions are shaped not only by perceived benefits, but also by the way they manage difficulties through self-regulated coping strategies.

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