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Addressing the Role of Structured Extensive Listening among Low-Proficiency Thai Learners of English

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Abstract

*Despite growing research on extensive listening (EL), structured approaches tailored for low-proficiency EFL learners struggling with self-directed learning are limited. The study examined 1) the effects of EL on students' listening comprehension, 2) the correlation between EL hours and listening comprehension scores, and 3) student perceptions of the EL program. An embedded experimental design was employed in this research. A total of 66 students in the subsidized university in Thailand were selected using a purposive sampling technique. They were assigned to two groups—33 students in the EL treatment group and the other 33 in the comparison group, which received classroom listening activities in the form of textbook-based listening exercises. The research instruments include a placement test, pre- and post-listening comprehension test, a listening log, and a focus-group interview. To analyze the data, t-tests were used to compare the groups and assess pre- and post-test improvements within the experimental group. Cohen's *d* was calculated to determine the effect size of the improvement. Pearson correlation was used to evaluate the relationship between extensive listening hours and post-test scores, while the focus-group interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis to examine students' perceptions. The findings revealed a significant improvement in listening comprehension for the experimental group, with a moderate effect size. A positive correlation ($r = .79$) was found between listening hours and test scores. Qualitative findings revealed that students experienced greater enjoyment, confidence, motivation, and reduced anxiety compared to traditional classrooms, although some expressed concerns about the complexity of the listening logs. Overall, structured EL proves efficacy in enhancing listening comprehension and engagement for low-proficiency EFL learners.*

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Keywords: ESL podcast, listening comprehension, meaning-based listening, structured Extensive Listening, students' perceptions.

1. INTRODUCTION

The complex process of listening is challenging to comprehend, develop, or teach (Lynch & Mendelsohn, 2010; Vandergrift, 2007). However, teaching listening receives minimal attention compared to other skills in EFL contexts (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). EFL students face the challenge of dealing with not only the problematic features of listening and limited listening instruction but also different listening tasks in textbooks. Proficient students may navigate tasks effortlessly, but lower-proficiency students are often left to handle listening problems independently (Renandya & Farrell, 2011).

Thai EFL students often show low proficiency levels, as evidenced by Waluyo (2019). It was found that 77.3% of 2,248 first-year Thai EFL students were at lower CEFR levels (A1 and A2). Consequently, students consistently report common listening problems, including unfamiliar accents, fast speech rates, and limited practice (Jayawasu, 1998; Kajornboon, 2011; Piamsai, 2014; Sriprom, 2011). Persistent issues like inadequate practice and limited English exposure (Bennui, 2007; Chonprakay, 2009; as cited in Suwannasit, 2019) raise further questions about our current teaching efficacy.

Educators must employ an approach that requires ample listening practice while addressing challenges such as fast-paced speech and limited language exposure. Extensive Listening (EL) offers a promising solution, focusing on comprehensible input at a comfortable pace to improve listening skills through frequent, enjoyable practice (Ivone & Renandya, 2019; Waring, 2008). However, Vandergrift and Goh (2012) highlighted the lack of clear structure in EL, which can limit its effectiveness for students, particularly for low-proficiency learners. Evidence for these concerns was found in studies by Goh (2002), reporting that only 18% of students succeeded in self-listening practice due to a lack of structured and clear guidelines. One key issue identified by Vandergrift and Goh (2012) is that students cannot see their progress, discouraging them from practicing listening independently. To address this, it is essential to include elements that allow students to track their performance, thereby increasing the relevance of their practice and providing clear guidelines for the EL model. Building on the principles of EL, we propose a structured Extensive Listening with three key components: (1) meaning-based activities, such as oral cloze exercises that allow students to track their performance during in-class sessions; (2) listening logs to facilitate planning, self-monitoring, and post-listening exercises for out-of-class activities; and (3) a collaborative learning environment to encourage peer support and interaction, particularly for low-proficiency learners.

While the benefits of EL have been recognized in various foreign contexts (Alm, 2013; Cahyana, 2020; Chang et al., 2019; Gonulal, 2020; Lee & Cha, 2017; Saputra & Fatimah, 2018; Yudhiantara & Syihabuddin, 2023; Yusra & Hanifa, 2023), its generalizability to the Thai context remains uncertain. Thai EFL learners often face challenges such as passive learning habits and teacher-centered instruction (Noom-ura, 2013). Furthermore, understanding learners' perceptions is essential, as their views, experiences, and engagement can significantly influence the effectiveness of the structured EL program. This gap underscores the need for more localized studies to investigate the impact of structured EL programs on Thai learners' listening proficiency.

To address the identified research gaps, this study proposed a structured EL approach tailored specifically for low-proficiency Thai EFL students. It includes meaning-based listening for EL classrooms, a listening log as an EL aid, and collaborative learning as an EL setting to enhance engagement and reduce anxiety. As a result, the research questions are as follows:

1. To what extent does structured Extensive Listening enhance low-proficiency Thai students' listening comprehension?

2. Is there a significant relationship between listening hours and Thai students' listening comprehension? If yes, to what extent?
3. How do students perceive the effectiveness of the structured EL program in improving their listening comprehension?

The anticipated benefits of the proposed EL program include assisting students in overcoming common listening problems and providing guidance to teachers on incorporating it into the classroom setting.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Extensive Listening (EL) has begun to gain recognition as a beneficial approach for enhancing listening skills. This section analyzes the concept and principles of the EL approach as a pedagogical approach for enhancing listening skills. The following section examines the structured EL program, highlighting its essential components: meaning-based activities, the role of listening logs, and the benefits of collaborative learning.

2.1 Extensive Listening

Extensive Listening (EL) is a pedagogical approach to developing listening skills in which learners are immersed in spoken English without external pressure or constraints (Gavenila et al., 2021). Ivone and Renandya (2019) defined EL in the context of EFL as a language learning approach that involves exposing learners to a large number of simple and enjoyable listening materials over a period of time. To implement an EL project, the principles, synthesized from the works of Vandergrift and Goh (2012), Renandya and Jacobs (2016), and Mayora (2017) should guide the selection of comprehensible materials, the encouragement of consistent practice, the promotion of bimodal input, the creation of a supportive, motivating, and accountable learning environment with clear objectives and ongoing teacher support, as illustrated in Figure 1.

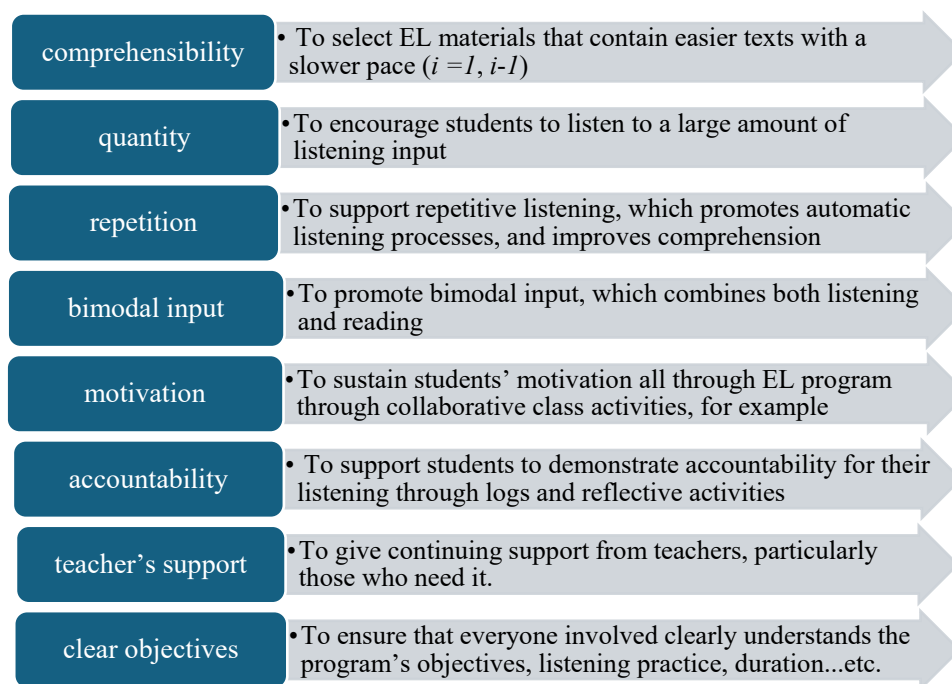


Figure 1. Extensive listening principles applied in the study

Most EL principles here are adopted from Extensive Reading (ER) principles, which have been widely studied and endorsed for their positive effects on reading proficiency and motivation (Renandya, 2011; Renandya & Jacobs, 2016). A 2015-2018 review of EL studies in the Indonesian EFL context found that most studies focused more on the authenticity of materials (e.g., music and movies) than on actual listening practice (Ivone & Renandya, 2019). More recent studies, however, have adopted more experimental approaches (Chang et al., 2019; Gonulal, 2020; Kampiranon, 2021; Karlin & Karlin, 2019, 2021). Overall, the literature suggests that EL is a valuable approach. However, EL programs with structured approaches for low-proficiency learners remain scant. Therefore, the following section introduces a framework that addresses these gaps through purposeful activities integrated into the structured EL program.

2.2 Structured Extensive Listening

Building on these findings, the structured EL program distinguishes itself by integrating meaning-based classroom activities that reduce cognitive load by minimizing segmental-level decoding challenges. It also incorporates listening logs to enhance learner control and self-regulation, along with post-listening exercises. Furthermore, the program promotes collaborative learning by creating low-anxiety environments that enable students to develop confidence through meaningful practice and shared experiences. The following sections will detail how these elements can be effectively implemented in an EL program.

2.2.1 Effectiveness of meaning-based activities

In addition to independent listening practice, Vandergrift and Goh (2012) highlighted the importance of reflective tasks, such as performance evaluation and progress tracking, to self-directed learning. Our EL program builds on this by integrating meaning-based activities that not only focus on language form but also emphasize meaning, to crucially address a gap in earlier studies that concentrated on form-based instruction (Wang, 2014). We have included storytelling, an oral cloze activity where students listen to a story and predict missing words during pauses, ensuring engagement without disturbing the story's flow as recommended by Nation and Newton (2009) for EL class. While cloze tasks may appear to be form-oriented, their actual value comes from engaging learners in meaning-making. Learners predict upcoming words and phrases, developing a holistic understanding of the story listened to, which improves their listening comprehension. Pardede (2011) supports storytelling as a valuable language teaching strategy. Phillips (2000) notes that purposeful storytelling creates a positive atmosphere, stimulates imagination, and develops insight.

Students can observe their performance and progress by engaging in simple activities as previously described, promoting motivation to persist in their listening practice (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). This simple yet beneficial task is to be conducted in EL class; however, the emphasis of EL is on students practicing listening independently. As a result, this model introduces a further instrument to aid in self-control and regulation to develop good listening habits.

2.2.2 Role of listening logs

Graham (2006) noted that simply practicing listening is not enough; students need to feel empowered to control their practice and believe in the possibility of their improvement. To support this need for empowerment, one effective tool is the use of listening logs, which enable students to track and reflect on their listening practice systematically. A listening log is defined as a continuous task in which students record their participation in extracurricular activities. It requires students to record the subject and reflect on their understanding of each piece of content they listen to. They can set targets that are monitored through the log (Gilliland, 2015). In an EL program, students are responsible for planning their weekly practice, monitoring and reflecting on their chosen listening topics, and completing post-listening exercises. In this way, the log promotes control, self-regulation, and communication with teachers about learning needs (Lee &

Cha, 2017). The focus on individualized reflection, goal setting, and progress monitoring develops self-regulation and learner autonomy, which is crucial for low-proficiency learners challenged by independent study.

2.2.3 Benefits of collaborative learning in EL

Vandergrift and Goh (2012) noted that low-proficiency students are frequently placed in stressful situations where they must demonstrate their comprehension, often revealing how little they have grasped, leading to increased levels of anxiety among these students. The structured EL program addresses these challenges by creating low-anxiety, collaborative learning environments, focusing on meaningful language practice in a supportive context. Hadley (2001) argued that, for low-proficiency students, being in a customized setting is especially helpful in minimizing stress. In EL classrooms, students listen to stories, complete cloze activities, exchange language knowledge, and discuss learning experiences. Collaborative learning encourages interactions, accountability, and peer value (Laal & Ghodsi, 2012), creating a supportive learning community.

The structured EL program offers a unique combination of meaning-based activities, listening logs, and collaborative learning, designed specifically to meet the needs of low-proficiency learners. Through self-regulation, reflection, and peer collaboration, students gain both the tools and the confidence needed to improve their listening skills in a supportive environment. This model addresses gaps in prior studies, which lacked structure and collaborative elements, making it novel to the field of extensive listening and language education.

3. METHODS

This section provides an overview of the study's methodology, including the research design, participants, instrument, data collection, and data analysis. The study combines quantitative and qualitative data using a mixed-methods approach to offer a comprehensive assessment of the efficacy of the structured EL program. The design, sampling, tools, and analysis framework used to address the research questions are described in detail in the following sections.

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts an embedded design, in which qualitative data plays a supportive role within a primarily quantitative framework (Creswell et al., 2003). The embedded experimental model adapted from Creswell (2006) used in this study is shown in the following figure:

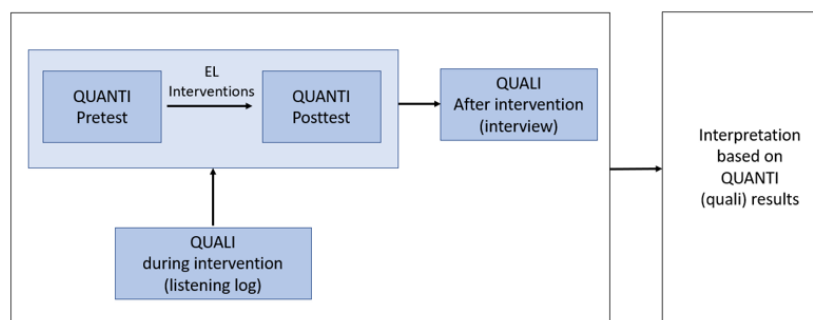


Figure 2. Embedded experimental research design in the study

In this embedded experimental design, qualitative and quantitative data are integrated throughout the study. The qualitative listening log tracks participants' listening time during data collection. In the analysis, quantitative results from listening comprehension tests complement the thematic analysis of focus group data, while focus group insights help interpret the quantitative findings. The most significant integration occurs during interpretation, where participants'

qualitative feedback enriches the understanding of their quantitative listening performance outcomes.

Participants were divided into two groups: the experimental group, which engaged in an EL program involving independent podcast listening, log keeping, oral cloze activities, and collaborative meetings. In contrast, the comparison group mainly received listening tasks based on textbooks prescribed by the curriculum. These tasks consisted of pre-selected dialogues or passages, accompanied by comprehension questions aligned with specific curriculum objectives. Qualitative data were collected through focus group interviews and listening logs.

3.2 Participants

The study focused on students aged 18 to 22 enrolled in introductory English courses (Fundamental English I, II, and III) at a subsidized university in Thailand. All participants shared similar backgrounds and had no prior experience in an English program or exposure to English-speaking environments. The experimental group had 26 females and seven males, while the comparison group included 22 females and 11 males. A placement test was used to determine eligibility and ensure appropriate participant selection and grouping. Participants' scores ranged from 1 to 40, corresponding to A1 and A2 CEFR levels. Of the 66 participants, 33 joined the EL program, and 33 formed the comparison group.

Non-probability purposive sampling was used, relying on voluntary participation. This ensured that participants met specific criteria (age, language proficiency, course enrollment) and were willing to commit to the semester-long program. Since participants were not randomly assigned, those in the experimental group may have had higher intrinsic motivation to improve their English, a key factor in language learning success (Oxford & Shearin, 1994, as cited in [Marszalek et al., 2022](#)).

Ethical considerations were relevant to this study. The study's proposal and related documents were submitted to the Human Research Ethics Committee, and approval was obtained before the data was collected. The research adhered to the IRB code of conduct, protecting the rights and well-being of participants. The EL program was organized as a voluntary club, and informed consent was obtained from every participant on the orientation day. Participants were free to select either the experimental or the comparison group or withdraw from the study entirely. They were informed of their rights, including the freedom to withdraw at any moment without repercussions.

3.3 Research Instrument

3.3.1 A placement test: EF SET

The EF SET is a standardized English test that adapts to test takers' levels of comprehension and is taken in real time. The placement test in this study aimed to identify basic language users (A1 and A2 proficiency levels in CEFR). It evaluates listening and reading abilities, categorizing them within the CEFR's six proficiency levels. [Shahrokni \(2018\)](#) found the EF SET reliable for assessing English proficiency. A comprehensive five-stage design and development phase that includes expert advice, item trials, and standard-setting panels has proved EF SET's validity. The EF SET was chosen as the study's placement test due to its validity, reliability, cost-effectiveness, and convenience.

3.3.2 Listening comprehension pre-test and post-test

The listening comprehension test, adapted from the TOEIC Bridge Listening test, assessed students' proficiency levels before and after the program. According to [Schmidgall et al. \(2019\)](#), the TOEIC Bridge Test is validated as it aligns with CEFR and CLB standards, measuring relevant skills for beginners to lower-intermediate learners. Validity research supports its accuracy in reflecting real-world language competencies. The test focuses on basic up to intermediate English

used daily, matching the ESL podcast content. It included 50 multiple-choice questions across four parts and underwent validation by three English lecturers using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC). Subsequently, a pilot test with 30 non-participants was conducted, and internal consistency reliability was calculated using the Kuder–Richardson formula (KR-20, $r = 0.90$). The test was administered as a pre-test in week one and a post-test in week fifteen to measure students' progress consistently.

3.3.3 *Listening log*

The listening log was adapted from the studies of Lee and Cha (2017), Yeh (2017), and Kampiranon (2021). These elements encompass a weekly listening plan, a response to the chosen topic (such as expressing enjoyment or critique of the story), reflection on encountered difficulties, a summary, and the compilation of newly acquired vocabulary. Its objectives include scheduling listening sessions, noting durations, summarizing stories, assessing enjoyment, and recording new language. By maintaining listening logs, students learn to plan their listening, track their comprehension, solve complex tasks, and analyze the results (Chen, 2019).

3.3.4 *Focus group interview*

A focus group interview was chosen for its natural environment, reflecting real-life interactions (Casey & Kueger, 2000). Questions covered EL program effectiveness, satisfaction, and motivation to practice listening. Typically involving six to nine participants (Denscombe, 2007), this study included six students from the higher and another six from the lower listening hours group. The researcher moderated, asking pre-planned questions developed following Anderson's (1990) guidelines and adapted from Yeh (2017) and Kampiranon (2021). Questions underwent IOC evaluation by three experts for validity, with subsequent revisions based on their recommendations.

3.4 **Data Collection**

The program began with students who expressed interest and undertook the EF SET placement test. The EL program eligibility requirement was set to a scoring range between one and 40. The orientation session consists of consent forms, an overview of the program objectives, anticipated outcomes, duration, and a podcast introduction, followed by a pre-test on the same day. Participants began listening to podcasts from the first week while keeping a record of their listening habits. Collaborative meetings and oral cloze activities took place biweekly. In the last week, a post-test was administered, and focus group interviews were conducted with 12 students before the program concluded.

3.5 **Data Analysis**

This study implemented an embedded design, with quantitative data derived from pre- and post-test listening comprehension scores. The analysis involved descriptive statistics and paired sample t-tests to compare scores before and after the program within the experimental and comparison groups. In addition, independent sample t-tests were used to compare the pre- and post-test scores of the two groups, establishing a basis for assessing the efficacy of the EL program in relation to the comparison group.

Before conducting t-tests, the data was assessed for normality and homogeneity. Normality was evaluated using skewness and kurtosis values along with their corresponding Z-scores (ZSK and ZKU). The analysis showed that the pre-test scores (ZSK = -0.249, ZKU = -1.488) and post-test scores (ZSK = -0.540, ZKU = -0.100) were approximately normally distributed, meeting the criteria for normality. The homogeneity of variances was then verified using Levene's Test to ensure equal variances across groups. Following these verifications, t-tests were applied.

Additionally, Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was used to assess the relationship between listening hours and post-test scores.

Qualitative data from focus group interviews and listening logs underwent thematic analysis, using Braun and Clarke's (2006) systematic six-step process to ensure a structured and transparent framework. Verbatim transcription and repeated reading were used for familiarization and transcription to pinpoint key concepts. Initial coding assigned short labels to relevant data, such as coding "I prefer the red app [ESL Conversation] because it features easy daily life vocabulary" as "Ease of Use", which was later grouped under the broader theme "Autonomy in Choosing ESL Podcasts and Perceived Input Ease." Themes were developed by grouping related codes, like combining "motivation boost" and "learning reflections" into "Enhanced Motivation," and then refined to ensure clarity and distinctiveness. Themes were named and defined (e.g., "Recognized Benefits Amidst Struggles with Listening Logs" emphasized balancing challenges and achievements), and the final phase reported themes with illustrative quotes, linking them to the study's objectives. This served as a supportive role, such as increased motivation in listening practice, complementing the quantitative improvements in post-test scores. This qualitative component provided context for quantitative findings, offering insights into students' experiences. Quantitative and qualitative data allowed for a comprehensive interpretation of the program's effectiveness, while maintaining the primacy of quantitative results.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the study's findings, divided into three primary sections. First, it examines participants' listening comprehension, highlighting improvements in pre- and post-test scores. Second, it investigates the relationship between the number of listening hours and students' listening comprehension scores, providing insight into the impact of practice time on effectiveness. Finally, students' perceptions of the structured EL program are discussed, providing an understanding of their experiences and the program's impact on motivation and learning outcomes.

4.1 Participants' Listening Comprehension

This section addresses the first research question, evaluating the efficacy of the proposed structured EL on student's listening comprehension scores. The outcomes from the independent samples t-test presented in Table 1 suggest that before the program, the comparison group and the experimental group exhibited considerable similarities, with no statistically significant distinction observed in the pre-test mean scores between the two groups ($p = .060$). Nonetheless, following the program, the experimental group surpassed the comparison group, as evidenced by a statistically significant difference in the post-test mean scores between the two groups ($p = .000$), as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of students' pre- and post-test listening comprehension scores.

	Comparison Group ($n = 33$)		Experimental Group ($n = 33$)		Mean Dif.	t-test for Equality of Means	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		<i>T</i>	Sig.(2-tailed)
Pre-test	20.30	3.026	21.57	4.678	1.545	1.594	.060
Post-test	21.21	2.666	32.18	4.496	10.969	12.055	.000

Note. Significant at $*p < .05$ level.

The experimental group's mean scores improved from 21.57 to 32.18, showing a medium effect size (Cohen's $d = .59$). The crucial factor highlighted in this study is the time dedicated to listening, shown to significantly enhance students' listening skills. Scholars in L2 learning have reached similar conclusions; for example, Nord (1980), Rost (1994) and Krashen (1995) all found that exposure to substantial listening input significantly improved second language learning and

acquisition as well as building the necessary cognitive learning map (Renandya, 2011; Renandya & Farrell, 2011). On average, students spent 15.87 hours listening to podcasts, 16.47 hours maintaining listening logs, and 6.03 hours practicing oral cloze activity in class, totaling an average of 38.37 hours, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of time spent in extensive listening program.

Listening practice mode	Min	Max	Median	Mean	SD
Hours spent on podcast listening ($n = 33$)	5.44	23.40	16.20	15.87	4.97
Hours spent on writing listening log ($n = 33$)	9.10	22.10	17.30	16.47	3.65
Hours spent on oral cloze activity ($n = 33$)	4.00	7.00	6.00	6.03	0.85
Hours in total	18.54	52.50	39.50	38.37	

Our results align with Gonulal (2020) and Karlin and Karlin (2021) but contradict Karlin and Karlin (2019). Gonulal's (2020) one-year study highlighted the importance of weekly EL engagement, with students spending about an hour weekly, mostly on log assignments. This supports EL principles, which stress the importance of practice for enhancing listening ability. Gonulal's study highlights the significance of time as the primary factor influencing listening improvement. Karlin and Karlin's (2019) study found intensive listening (IL) more effective than EL, likely due to more practice time. However, their 2021 study showed different results: the EL group, summarizing three audiobooks, outperformed the IL group, which transcribed one audiobook. This underscores the importance of time allocation for listening and post-listening activities.

Two key factors that may have contributed to the improvement of students' post-test scores, namely the features of bimodal input and comprehensible input. Bimodal input, which combines listening with reading transcripts, enhances comprehension by engaging different sensory modalities. Previous studies, such as Chang and Millett (2014) and Chang et al. (2019), highlighted the effectiveness of the 'linked skills' technique or bimodal input, improving comprehension, confidence, motivation, and vocabulary recognition. These findings are consistent with earlier research by Brown et al. (2008) and Chang (2011), which also demonstrated that bimodal input could improve vocabulary acquisition. The introduction of bimodal ESL podcasts via a mobile app presents an effective tool, especially for learners with lower proficiency levels. Likewise, comprehensible input refers to listening material at or slightly below the students' current proficiency level (i , $i-1$). Although in other language skills students are usually exposed to content slightly above their current competency level ($i + 1$), the type of listening materials demands a different approach. For listening, materials should align with students' present level (i) or even be below their proficiency level ($i-1$) (Renandya, 2011). The difference is justified given the naturally challenging character of listening input, as Krashen's (1982) SLA terminology suggests. This result also corresponds to studies by Mason (2011, 2013), who showed that comprehensible input is how one acquires the language. The use of ESL podcasts that feature simplified texts, familiar vocabulary, and slower speech rates is a practical way to provide such input, particularly for low-proficiency students.

As this study uses an embedded research design, it is important to see how the qualitative data supports the main research question. The qualitative findings show positive student experiences, such as increased motivation and engagement from various parts of the program. For example, participant 26 expressed increased confidence and use of English outside of class. Participant 19 reported that podcasts were more straightforward to engage with than classroom audio. These findings support the quantitative data, demonstrating that personalized, comprehensible input improved motivation and listening performance.

Building on these qualitative insights, educators should recognize the importance of listening duration in improving listening skills and actively engage students in consistent listening practice. By incorporating EL principles like comprehensible and bimodal input into the curriculum, educators can create practical listening activities. This integration would encourage students to practice both in and outside the classroom, leading to sustained engagement and improved listening skills.

4.2 The Relationship Between Listening Hours and Students' Listening Comprehension Scores

Table 3 shows the relationship between listening comprehension scores and number of listening hours. The data reveal a significant positive relationship, $r(33) = .79, p < .01$. In other words, listening comprehension scores increase in proportion to the number of listening hours. The correlation value of .79 represents a substantial effect size, demonstrating a significant relationship between these two variables.

Table 3. Correlations between listening comprehension scores and number of listening hours (N=33)

Variable	1	2
1. Listening Comprehension Scores	—	.79**
2. Number of Listening Hours	.79**	—

Note. Pearson's r is reported. $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

In Extensive Reading (ER) guidelines, Nation and Wang (1999) suggested reading at least one book weekly to enhance fluency in understanding written texts. However, EL studies lack explicit information on the minimal listening quantity required. It is, therefore, meaningful to investigate the correlation between the hours of listening and improved listening comprehension. These results correlate with Bozan's (2015) findings but not with Metruk's (2019). Three interpretations of the apparent relationship's absence or presence are possible.

Firstly, the crucial factor to consider in assessing the correlation is the number of listening hours. When comparing the number of listening hours, this study recorded a mean of 38.37 listening hours together with post-listening activity. According to the regression analysis, Bozan's (2015) study reported a listening hour mean of 46.47 and a statistically significant positive correlation between hours of listening and post-test scores. Metruk's (2019) study alternatively reported a mean listening practice for three groups of students: 19.8, 19.0 and 23.3, with the result that these numbers did not appear to play a substantial role in relation to students' listening. As we found only two studies examining the correlation, we can only conclude that a mean of 38.37 hours potentially reveals a significant correlation between listening hours and students' listening scores. Further studies investigating the minimum hours of listening and their impact are necessary for EL (Renandya & Jacobs, 2016).

Secondly, there are differences in the listening input and post-listening activities. This study used ESL podcasts as the primary tool, along with listening log assignments involving summarization and identification of newly learned words and their meanings for each listened-to title. These activities aid in focusing on keywords and phrases for better retention and recall (Nurhayati & Fitriana, 2018). In contrast, Bozan's (2015) and Metruk's (2019) studies relied on movies and TV programs without follow-up tasks. Adding post-listening activities enhances comprehension and promotes active participation, creating a dynamic learning environment. Further research could explore different EL post-listening activities' impact on listening outcomes and student engagement.

Thirdly, the choice of measurement tools can vary among studies, potentially affecting the observed correlation. This study utilized an adapted listening test designed specifically for low-proficiency students, while Metruk's (2019) participants were in the intermediate range (B2 plus), with limited information available on the test.

The subsequent section explores student perceptions of the proposed structured EL program. We coded and categorized the interviews based on recurring themes, following the thematic analysis procedure. Insights drawn from focus group interviews and students' online reflections, as recorded in listening logs, are organized into five themes. These themes include (i) students' increased motivation, (ii) autonomy in selecting ESL podcasts and perceived ease of input level, (iii) acknowledged benefits amidst challenges with listening log, (iv) the role of oral cloze activities in enhancing story comprehension, and (v) appreciation and engagement in a supportive learning environment.

4.3 Students' Perceptions toward the Structured Extensive Listening

To better understand how varying levels of listening practice influenced participants' perceptions and experiences, participants were categorized into two groups based on their listening hours: the higher listening hours group (41.50–48.83) and the lower listening hours group (19.54–38.30). These groupings aimed to identify potential differences in how participants with varying amounts of listening practice perceived and experienced the structured EL program. The insights drawn from focus group interviews and online reflections, as recorded in listening logs, are organized into five recurring themes that reflect the participants' perceptions of the structured EL program.

4.3.1 *Students' increased motivation*

A total of 12 out of 33 participants in the focus group acknowledged an increase in motivation compared to traditional listening in a classroom setting, which typically involved textbook-bound audio activities with pre-selected passages or dialogues tied to specific language exercises in the curriculum. Below are selected excerpts, one from the higher listening hour group and another from the lower counterpart.

- (1) I am motivated. I learned more words – this kept me going. I feel more confident when I chat [online] with friends. While we usually chat [online] in Thai, lately, I have been using more English words. (Participant 26, higher listening hour).
- (2) When I learned listening strategies in class, such as intonation, I never actually used those strategies during real listening. That's why I prefer ESL podcasts or easy stories - I don't need to focus on the falling and rising intonation as separate units. (Participant 19, lower listening hour).

The EL approach would appeal to students since it offers helpful concepts like providing comprehensible input matching their proficiency, allowing topic choice, easy in-class listening, and supportive meetings. High engagement in independent listening and class activities indicates positive perceptions about the program. Despite varied listening hours, 12 participants felt more motivated and confident in their skills. Some participants suggested integrating EL into traditional English classes due to its alignment with competency and learning style. Qualitative verbal data from some participants supports the quantitative findings, indicating they were more motivated and felt less pressure than studying in class. Consequently, their listening hours increased, and their post-test scores significantly improved.

4.3.2 *Autonomy in selecting ESL podcasts and perceived ease of input level*

Most students with higher listening hours reported that the difficulty level of ESL podcasts was perceived as neutral and easy, as reported in both listening logs and interviews. They expressed a degree of satisfaction with most topics. During the interview, they shared reasons for enjoying podcast listening, e.g., new or interesting content, humor, and brevity. Similarly, students with lower listening hours found the difficulty level neutral and preferred a medium level of enjoyment. The findings are shown in excerpts (3) and (4).

- (3) I prefer the red app [ESL Conversation] because it features easy daily life vocabulary and is easy to understand. The green app [British Council], even though it is long, contains some funny jokes. (Participant 20, higher listening hour).
- (4) I listened to some content, mostly the green app [British Council]. I enjoyed the content, and it has a British English accent too. It is not too difficult to understand. (Participant 18, lower listening hour).

These graded podcasts cater to diverse interests and are reported as easily understandable by participants. The difficulty level involves content, vocabulary, grammar, and speed – a common challenge for L2 students (Renandya & Farrell, 2011). However, students noted that

speed issues are reduced by the application's speed feature, which offers adjustable speed settings and transcripts for reading while listening. These features help low-proficiency students better manage their listening input. In addition to aiding comprehension, the podcasts also engage students with content aligned with their interests.

When discussing the enjoyment of using ESL podcasts, participants emphasized that choosing their own ESL podcast content made learning more enjoyable and engaging, leading to better comprehension by focusing on topics of genuine interest. The genres they selected varied widely, including self-improvement, technology, the Covid-19 pandemic, animals, sports, and social sciences. Table 4 shows examples of the preferred genres from students' listening logs.

Table 4. Top five preferred genres of ESL podcasts.

Genre	Example of titles	Frequency of selection	Level of difficulty for All titles	Level of enjoyment for all titles
Talk show (Mix of getting to know places, people, jokes, countries., etc.)	- Talk series 1 - Talk series 2 - Talk series 3 - Talk series 4	132	Very easy (8.51%)	Very satisfied (11.36%)
Self-improvement	- How gaming can help you learn English - Keeping a journal - A little English everyday - Relaxation techniques - The power of introverts	51	Easy (27.66%)	Satisfied (47.73%)
Social science	- Society's phone addiction - K wave phenomenon - Population explosion - Its black Friday - Virtual culture	45	Neutral (48.94%)	Neutral (31.82%)
English language	- Ways to learn English 2 - Useful app for English - Introducing your friends - English online series 1 - English etymology	24	Not so easy (14.89%)	Dissatisfied (9.09%)
Science	- The 10,000-step challenge - Images from deep space - Your immune system - Online learning - The power of water	21	Difficult (0.00%)	Very dissatisfied (0.00%)

Table 4 shows that Talk Series titles on topics like places, people, jokes, songs, culture, and countries are popular despite their 20–30 minute duration. Students can pause, resume, or switch titles, with some preferring shorter podcasts. Two students mentioned humor as a reason for enjoying Talk Series, echoing [Alm's \(2013\)](#) findings. Students also find accessing podcasts via mobile phones convenient, encouraging more listening practice. Studies by [Mahmudah \(2015\)](#), [Al-Baekani and Ridwan \(2018\)](#), and [Saputra and Fatimah \(2018\)](#) have highlighted the positive learning experiences associated with online resources on mobile devices, particularly among Generation Z students ([Sriprom et al., 2019](#)).

4.3.3 Acknowledged benefits amidst struggles with listening log

Participants with higher listening hours noted that listening logs aided their focus by providing weekly/daily goals to strive for, creating a sense of achievement. They also emphasized that the log served as a review of the content and words they had learned. However, they admitted that the various sections in the logs can be burdensome. Interestingly, participants with lower listening hours also noted the perceived burden. The following excerpts illustrate the findings.

- (5) It helped me follow my listening plan and kept me focused while listening, so I knew what they were talking about. But when I listened to many topics, I spent much time filling out a lot of information in the logs. (Participant 03, higher listening hour).
- (6) When I listen, I know what to pay attention to when writing a summary. But there are too many parts to fill out. I think it was too much. (Participant 04, lower listening hour).

Studies by [Kemp \(2010\)](#), [Chen \(2016\)](#), and [Lee and Cha \(2017\)](#) show that listening logs improve various language skills and confidence. The log aligns with the reflection stage of the Experiential Learning Theory ([Chen, 2016](#)). The listening logs in this study have such components as time spent, number of repetitions, difficulty, enjoyment, problems, and post-listening activities. Students reported spending more time on log maintenance than listening. Despite recognizing the log's benefits, participants found its demanding nature demotivating. While valuable for research, the log design should be adjusted to strike a balance, ensuring students gain practice without feeling overwhelmed.

To address these concerns, listening logs can help students stay focused and create attainable goals, promoting a sense of achievement. However, to prevent overloading students, teachers should simplify the log format. By maintaining a balance between post-exercises and actual listening practice, teachers could ensure that logs continue to be helpful. It should be noted that logs can be tailored at different competence levels to increase student engagement.

4.3.4 *The role of oral cloze activities in enhancing story comprehension*

The main argument for using cloze activities is that they encourage learners to focus on the overall meaning of the story, enabling them to predict missing words based on the broader context ([Nation & Newton, 2009](#)). Participants from higher and lower listening hours indicated enjoyment of the stories used in oral cloze activities. They could comprehend most stories they listened to in the classroom, despite encountering some unfamiliar words at times. The following excerpts illustrate the findings.

- (7) When I listened attentively to follow the story, I could understand and have fun eventually. I rarely feel like this in a typical English classroom. Though I didn't know some words, I could guess the missing ones. I enjoyed writing down some vocabulary on paper, and the stories were enjoyable. (Participant 08, higher listening hour).
- (8) It was good to sit with friends; it felt more competitive, which made me more focused on the tasks. I got pretty good scores, and I think the [oral cloze] task was not too difficult. (Participant 19, lower listening hour).

This paper presents a pioneering investigation into the integration of meaning-based activities, such as oral cloze exercises. Oral cloze has received positive feedback, attributed to its perceived simplicity and emphasis on meaning, which aids in scaffolding the learning process, particularly in listening comprehension. [Newmark \(1981\)](#) asserted that adequate comprehension relies on ample instances of language in which students, attentive to the task, can infer meaning. This aligns with the features of oral cloze, characterized by its immersive language context and emphasis on inferencing.

Three students expressed that understanding and enjoying stories become easier when compared to situations in the classroom, where they are restricted from looking at scripts and focus solely on comprehension exercises. This often-overlooked activity serves not only to strengthen comprehension but also to provide stimulating challenges. It enables students to monitor their progress and compare their scores to previous attempts. The aim is to cultivate confidence, motivating and encouraging students to pursue English listening programs further independently. Participants reported a positive impact on confidence levels in interviews. Upon analyzing participant ratings of oral cloze sheets, A1-level stories were consistently enjoyed, whereas A2-level stories received neutral ratings. This suggests that more straightforward stories enhance enjoyment among students.

In addition to these student experiences, teachers can use meaning-based activities, such as oral cloze exercises, to improve listening comprehension and inference skills. Moreover, selecting

stories corresponding to students' proficiency levels, especially simpler texts for beginners, promotes enjoyment and confidence. Tracking progress through repeated oral cloze exercises gives students evidence of development, which helps to motivate and encourage independent learning.

4.3.5 Student appreciation and engagement in a supportive learning environment

Participants from higher and lower listening hours appreciated the collaborative classroom setting. They appreciated a chance to talk and share knowledge and the challenges they faced in maintaining effective listening habits. The following excerpts illustrate the findings.

- (9) I like the atmosphere you [teacher] created here. Participating in a group sharing the same energy is great, and I feel no pressure. I have gained more confidence in talking in front of people, too. (Participant 26, Higher listening hour).
- (10) I don't usually enjoy studying English in a typical classroom, but I have enjoyed coming here even on Saturdays. I want to talk and participate in activities with other friends. (Participant 15, lower listening hour).

The collaborative setting in EL activities is important in supporting motivation among students with lower proficiency levels. As highlighted by [Littlejohn \(2001\)](#), despite the potential advantages of the content, students may exhibit limited improvement when lacking the motivation to learn. Developing an effective learning ecology for low-proficiency students starts with the teacher's willingness to guide and offer continuous support throughout the program, nurturing a sense of relatedness ([Muñoz-Restrepo et al., 2020](#)). Furthermore, increasing collaborative learning among peers and addressing barriers such as anxiety and self-esteem might help to improve student perception and achieve good learning outcomes.

Moreover, these qualitative insights are consistent with the quantitative findings, which show that personalized, comprehensible input improves motivation and listening performance. This shows how both types of data complement each other in understanding the overall impact of the program.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examined the impact of structured extensive listening programs on low-proficiency Thai students' listening comprehension. Findings show significant improvement with moderate effect size, influenced by listening time, bimodal input, and comprehensible input. A positive correlation emerged between listening hours and post-test scores, with an average of 38.37 hours of practice being a key factor. Students reported increased motivation, enjoying manageable content. While listening logs improved focus and goal-setting, they were seen as burdensome. Oral cloze activities and a collaborative environment enhanced engagement. These findings highlight structured EL programs' potential for improving low-proficiency learners' listening comprehension and engagement, but it is crucial to consider the study's limitations that may affect its rigor.

The study faced a few issues that must be addressed in future studies. First, the generalizability of the findings was limited by the small sample size of 33 participants in the experimental group. Future research should use a larger sample to improve external validity and provide a more robust analysis of the effects of the EL program. Furthermore, the 15-week EL intervention may not fully represent long-term effects on listening comprehension. Future studies should extend the intervention period to better understand long-term learning outcomes. Another limitation was the reliance on self-reported data from listening logs. As students voluntarily joined the program to improve their listening skills, they were guided by ethical protocols and were unlikely to fabricate data; however, some entries may be subjective. Future research should consider implementing more objective measures to track students' learning progress. Additionally, while a correlation between listening hours and post-test scores was identified,

correlation does not imply causation. Further studies should specify and systematically frame factors such as time and content listened to, enabling a more rigorous examination of cause-and-effect relationships.

To build on these findings, future studies should explore how varying amounts of listening practice correlate with comprehension across different proficiency levels and contexts. Additionally, incorporating innovative, meaning-focused activities to monitor progress could enhance the learning experience. Addressing these aspects in greater depth will provide more reliable and actionable insights into effective extensive listening practices.

Despite its limitations, the study provides a solid foundation for understanding the potential of the structured EL program in enhancing listening comprehension skills among low-proficiency learners. Future research that addresses these limitations will contribute to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the efficacy of EL programs and their implications for language education. By building on these insights, educators and policymakers can develop more effective, evidence-based listening interventions tailored to the needs of low-proficiency students.

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