



Exploring the Role of TED Talks in Developing EFL College Students' Critical Listening Skills

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Critical Listening; EFL Students; TED Talks; Authentic Digital Learning

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This study aimed to explore how TED Talks contribute to the development of EFL college students' critical listening skills by examining their learning experiences and perceptions of analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating authentic spoken English. A qualitative descriptive design was employed involving 26 undergraduate English Education students at an Indonesian university. Data were collected through Likert-scale and open-ended questionnaires, followed by semi-structured interviews with five purposively selected participants. The data were analyzed using Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's interactive model supported by descriptive statistics. The findings revealed four interconnected themes: TED Talks promoted analytical listening by improving students' ability to identify main ideas and discourse organization; enhanced interpretation of spoken messages through contextual reasoning and repeated listening; encouraged critical evaluation by examining arguments and supporting evidence; and fostered self-regulated learning through strategic use of subtitles, replaying videos, and vocabulary searches. Overall, TED Talks functioned as authentic digital learning resources that strengthened critical listening and learner autonomy. These findings imply that integrating TED Talks into EFL listening instruction can effectively promote higher-order thinking and independent learning.

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INTRODUCTION

Listening competence has become an increasingly important skill in contemporary society because individuals are constantly required to process spoken information accurately in academic, professional, and everyday communication (Bodie, 2023). In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, listening serves as the primary source of language input through which learners acquire vocabulary, pronunciation, grammatical patterns, and communicative competence (Daulay, 2025; Sari et al., 2024). Unlike hearing, listening involves active cognitive processes that require learners to receive, interpret, and construct meaning from spoken discourse (Chen et al., 2024; Duan & Zhao, 2025). In higher education, students are expected not only to comprehend lectures, presentations, and academic discussions but also to respond appropriately to authentic spoken information. Meaningful exposure to authentic English has likewise been shown

to strengthen listening competence and facilitate language development (Baidowi & Alsulami, 2025; Qureshi et al., 2022). Therefore, developing effective listening competence is essential for preparing university students to participate successfully in academic learning and global communication.

Although listening competence is increasingly emphasized in higher education, many EFL learners continue to experience difficulties in understanding and evaluating spoken English critically (Sahay, 2023). As language education increasingly promotes higher-order thinking, students are expected not only to comprehend spoken information but also to analyze, interpret, evaluate, and draw informed conclusions from what they hear (Arianto et al., 2025; Elsayed, 2024; Zhang, 2025). This ability, commonly referred to as critical listening, enables learners to distinguish facts from opinions, identify supporting evidence, recognize assumptions, evaluate arguments, and make reasoned judgments (Abid & Sain, 2025; Lai et al., 2022). However, these cognitive demands remain challenging because many learners rely primarily on literal comprehension without engaging in deeper analytical thinking. Consequently, students often experience difficulties when listening to authentic English materials that require interpretation and evaluation rather than simple information retrieval (Bakare, 2024; Kartikowati et al., 2026). These challenges indicate the growing need for instructional approaches that support both listening comprehension and higher-order cognitive development.

The challenges associated with critical listening are reflected in many English language classrooms where listening instruction continues to prioritize comprehension-based activities rather than analytical engagement (Daulay, 2025; Fawaid et al., 2024). Classroom practices commonly require students to answer factual questions or identify explicitly stated information after listening, while opportunities to analyze speakers' arguments, interpret implied meanings, evaluate evidence, or formulate critical responses remain relatively limited. As a result, students may achieve acceptable comprehension scores yet demonstrate limited ability to engage critically with authentic spoken discourse (Li et al., 2026; Rehman et al., 2024; Surur et al., 2026). Meanwhile, advances in digital technology have expanded access to authentic learning resources that provide greater flexibility, learner autonomy, and meaningful interaction with real-world language. Digital and mobile-assisted language learning environments encourage active participation and self-regulated learning (Arianto et al., 2025; Paulus, 2025). Nevertheless, these technological opportunities have not always been accompanied by instructional strategies specifically designed to cultivate students' critical listening abilities.

Among various authentic digital resources, TED Talks has attracted considerable attention as an instructional medium for English listening because it provides authentic spoken English across diverse topics, speakers, accents, and communication styles (Sutrisna, 2025; Viberg et al., 2023). The platform also offers interactive features, including subtitles, transcripts, adjustable playback speed, and replay functions that enable learners to regulate their listening activities according to their language proficiency and learning needs (Carcavilla-

González et al., 2025; Muawwanah & Lolita, 2026). More importantly, TED Talks are characterized by carefully curated content that undergoes editorial screening, fact-checking, and content evaluation before publication (Ahmad et al., 2022; Chikri & Kassou, 2024). According to TED's official Content Guidelines, speakers are expected to distinguish evidence-based claims from personal opinions and support their ideas using reliable sources. Consequently, TED Talks present coherent arguments supported by logical reasoning and empirical evidence, creating opportunities for learners to analyze ideas, interpret speakers' intentions, and evaluate supporting evidence during listening activities (Muawwanah & Lolita, 2026; Ramadhan & Aminatun, 2024).

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated the educational benefits of TED Talks in English language learning. Research has reported positive effects on listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation, learner motivation, authentic language exposure, learner autonomy, and self-regulated learning (Giri & Stolterman, 2025). These findings indicate that TED Talks effectively facilitate meaningful engagement with authentic spoken English while improving learners' overall listening performance (Huang et al., 2026). However, existing studies have predominantly adopted quantitative or experimental approaches that measure learning outcomes, leaving limited understanding of how learners experience the development of critical listening. Furthermore, relatively few studies have specifically examined learners' abilities to analyze, interpret, and evaluate spoken information while interacting with TED Talks. This unresolved gap highlights the need for qualitative investigations that explore students' perspectives and learning experiences in greater depth (Haşlamam et al., 2023; Liu & Hu, 2025).

Addressing this research gap is important because critical listening has become an essential component of higher-order thinking in English language education. Unlike previous studies that primarily examined improvements in listening comprehension or learner motivation through quantitative measurements, the present study focuses specifically on how TED Talks contribute to the development of critical listening among EFL college students (Dakir et al., 2021). The study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach by integrating Likert-scale questionnaires, open-ended responses, and semi-structured interviews to obtain comprehensive insights into students' learning experiences and perceptions. This methodological combination enables the investigation to move beyond measuring achievement by explaining the cognitive processes through which learners analyze, interpret, and evaluate spoken information. Accordingly, the study offers a novel contribution to the literature by connecting authentic digital listening resources with critical listening development from the perspective of learners' lived experiences.

Based on the preceding discussion, an important question remains regarding how authentic digital listening materials facilitate the development of critical listening in EFL higher education. Although TED Talks provide authentic language input supported by logical arguments, empirical evidence, and diverse perspectives, limited qualitative evidence explains how students perceive these

characteristics as contributing to their critical listening development. This study therefore seeks to answer the following research question: How do TED Talks contribute to the development of EFL college students' critical listening skills, particularly in helping them analyze, interpret, and evaluate spoken information based on their learning experiences and perceptions? The study argues that the authentic, evidence-based, and well-structured discourse presented in TED Talks encourages learners to engage in deeper cognitive processing beyond literal comprehension. The findings are expected to enrich theoretical understanding of critical listening while providing practical guidance for integrating authentic digital resources into English listening instruction.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the role of TED Talks in developing EFL undergraduate students' critical listening skills. A qualitative descriptive approach was selected because the study sought to obtain a comprehensive understanding of students' learning experiences and perceptions regarding the use of TED Talks as an authentic digital learning resource rather than examining causal relationships or measuring the effectiveness of an instructional intervention. The study focused on describing how students perceived the contribution of TED Talks to their ability to analyze, interpret, and evaluate spoken information in authentic listening contexts.

The study was conducted in the English Education Study Program at a university in Indonesia during the 2025/2026 academic year. The research setting was purposively selected because listening courses in the program regularly integrate authentic digital resources, particularly TED Talks, into classroom learning activities. Consequently, students had prior experience using TED Talks for listening practice, making the setting appropriate for investigating how authentic digital materials contribute to the development of critical listening skills. The participants consisted of 26 undergraduate EFL students selected through purposive sampling based on three criteria: (1) they were undergraduate students enrolled in the English Education Study Program, (2) they had previous experience using TED Talks for English listening activities, and (3) they voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. All twenty-six participants completed the questionnaire, while five students who were willing to share more detailed learning experiences were subsequently selected for semi-structured interviews.

Data were collected from April to May 2026 using two complementary techniques: questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire was administered online through Google Forms to all twenty-six participants to explore their perceptions of the role of TED Talks in developing critical listening skills. The questionnaire consisted of three sections. The first section collected demographic and learning background information, including the frequency of watching TED Talks, preferred topics, and reasons for using the platform. The second section contained thirteen four-point Likert-scale statements adapted

from Facione's (1990) critical thinking framework to examine three dimensions of critical listening: analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating spoken information (Muawwanah et al., 2026). The third section comprised four open-ended questions that allowed participants to explain their responses and describe their learning experiences in greater depth. Following the questionnaire, five participants were purposively selected for individual semi-structured interviews because they expressed their willingness to provide more detailed information. The interviews were conducted face-to-face, lasted approximately 30–45 minutes, were audio-recorded with participants' consent, and followed an interview guide consisting of five open-ended questions concerning the perceived benefits, challenges, learning strategies, and contribution of TED Talks to critical listening development. Follow-up questions were asked whenever clarification or deeper explanation was required.

The qualitative data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), encompassing data condensation, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification (Paulus, 2025). Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and open-ended questionnaire responses were compiled into textual documents. To ensure anonymity, interview data were coded as DI-R1–DI-R5 and questionnaire responses as DQ-R1–DQ-R26. Meaningful statements were coded, categorized, and synthesized into themes representing students' critical listening experiences. The findings were displayed through thematic matrices and narrative descriptions, while conclusions were refined through continuous comparison across data sources. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) summarized the Likert-scale responses to complement the qualitative analysis. Trustworthiness was established following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria through methodological triangulation, member checking, thick description, an audit trail, and confirmability procedures, ensuring that the findings accurately reflected participants' perspectives and were credible, dependable, transferable, and grounded in the collected data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

TED Talks Promote Analytical Listening Section

The first theme generated through the thematic analysis was TED Talks Promote Analytical Listening. Operationally, this finding refers to students' ability to analyze authentic spoken discourse by identifying the main ideas, recognizing supporting information, understanding the organizational structure of presentations, and following the logical progression of speakers' arguments while listening to TED Talks. Rather than merely recognizing isolated vocabulary or translating sentences, analytical listening in this study reflects students' active engagement in constructing meaning from spoken discourse through attention to discourse structure, coherence, and the relationships among ideas. The coding process identified four interconnected indicators representing this analytical listening process, namely Structural Analysis of Discourse, Core Idea

Identification, Discourse and Delivery Analysis, and Sequential Argument Tracking.

The interview findings indicate that students developed analytical listening by focusing on how ideas were organized throughout TED Talks rather than concentrating solely on individual words. One participant explained *"Usually I pay attention to the introduction, the key points, and the examples the speaker gives. From there, I can understand the main idea and figure out what the speaker actually wants to say."* (DI-R1, July 4, 2026). This statement demonstrates that the participant employed a discourse-level listening strategy by examining the structural components of the presentation before constructing overall meaning. The introduction, supporting examples, and key points functioned as organizational cues that enabled the participant to infer the speaker's intended message. From the researcher's perspective, this response illustrates that analytical listening emerged through students' awareness of discourse organization rather than through word-by-word comprehension. Students appeared to process spoken information by integrating multiple discourse elements into a coherent understanding, indicating higher-order listening processes involving analysis and interpretation.

Similarly, another participant emphasized the importance of logical sequencing within TED Talks *"I usually follow the speaker's arguments one by one. Since everything is explained step by step, it's easier to understand the discussion."* (DI-R4, July 13, 2026). The participant's response suggests that sequential organization facilitated the monitoring of idea development throughout the presentation. Instead of attempting to understand every lexical item, the participant relied on the progression of arguments to construct meaning. The researcher interprets this finding as evidence that authentic presentations with clear organizational patterns support students in recognizing causal relationships, supporting evidence, and argumentative flow. Consequently, analytical listening was demonstrated not only by identifying isolated information but also by understanding how ideas were connected across the entire discourse.

Table 1. Thematic Analysis of TED Talks Promote Analytical Listening

Data Source	Representative Quotation	Initial Code	Category	Theme
DI-R1	"Usually I pay attention to the introduction, the key points, and the examples the speaker gives..."	Identifying introduction, key points, and supporting examples	Structural Analysis of Discourse	TED Talks Promote Analytical Listening
DI-R2	"Sometimes I can understand the main idea directly."	Identifying the main idea	Core Idea Identification	TED Talks Promote Analytical Listening
DI-R3	"...I pay attention to the speaker's pronunciation and the way they explain their	Analyzing discourse organization	Discourse and Delivery Analysis	TED Talks Promote Analytical

	ideas."	and delivery		Listening
DI-R4	"I usually follow the speaker's arguments one by one..."	Following sequential arguments	Sequential Argument Tracking	TED Talks Promote Analytical Listening
DI-R5	"...the speakers explain their ideas in a very organized way."	Understanding organized presentations	Core Idea Identification	TED Talks Promote Analytical Listening

Table 1 demonstrates that the interview data consistently indicate students' engagement in analytical listening while interacting with TED Talks. The initial codes reveal that participants did not merely focus on understanding individual words but actively examined broader discourse features, including the introduction, key points, supporting examples, pronunciation, delivery style, and the sequential development of arguments. These responses were subsequently organized into four interconnected categories: Structural Analysis of Discourse, Core Idea Identification, Discourse and Delivery Analysis, and Sequential Argument Tracking, all of which collectively represent the theme TED Talks Promote Analytical Listening. The pattern suggests that students employed discourse-level processing to construct meaning from authentic spoken texts by recognizing organizational structures and logical relationships among ideas. This finding indicates that TED Talks encouraged learners to adopt higher-order listening strategies, enabling them to comprehend spoken discourse analytically rather than relying solely on vocabulary recognition or literal translation.

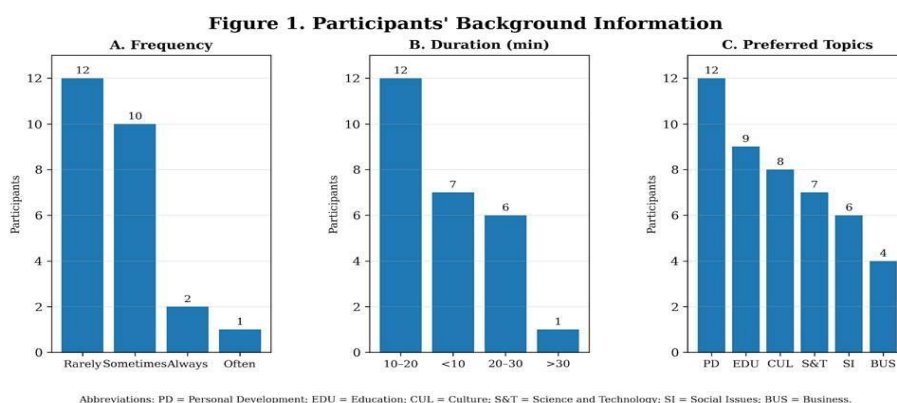


Figure 1. Participants' Background and Experience in Using TED Talks

Figure 1 presents participants' background information regarding their experience using TED Talks as an English learning resource. All 26 participants had prior experience using TED Talks, with most reporting occasional use and typical viewing sessions of 10–20 minutes. Personal Development emerged as the most frequently selected topic, followed by Education, Culture, Science and Technology, Social Issues, and Business. These findings indicate that participants had sufficient exposure to authentic English presentations, providing an appropriate basis for examining their perceptions of TED Talks in developing critical listening skills.

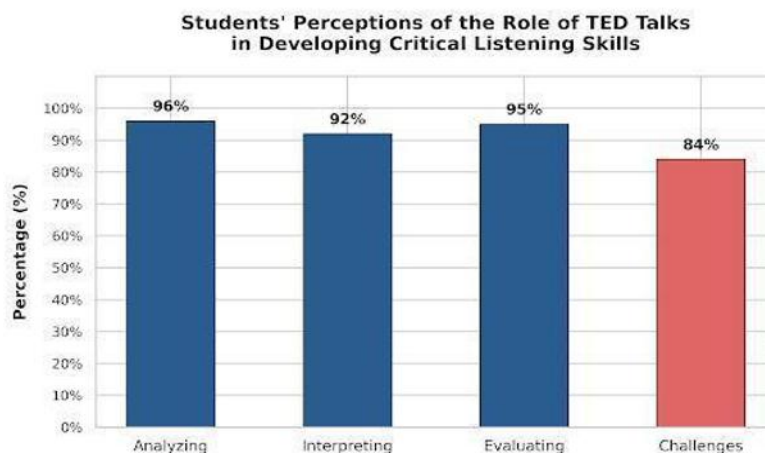


Figure 2. Students' Perceptions of TED Talks in Developing Critical Listening Skills

Figure 2 illustrates that students held overwhelmingly positive perceptions of the role of TED Talks in developing critical listening skills across all measured dimensions. The highest percentage was found in analyzing spoken information (96%), followed by evaluating ideas (95%) and interpreting spoken messages (92%). Although challenges and self-regulated learning received the lowest agreement (84%), the result still indicates a strong positive response. Overall, the findings suggest that students perceived TED Talks as an effective authentic learning resource for fostering higher-order listening skills, particularly in analyzing, interpreting, and critically evaluating spoken discourse.

TED Talks Enhance Interpretation of Spoken Messages

The second theme, TED Talks Enhance Interpretation of Spoken Messages, refers to students' ability to construct meaning from authentic spoken discourse by moving beyond literal word recognition to interpret speakers' intended messages. The analysis identified five indicators of this process: Discerning Speaker Intent, Meaning Verification and Motivation Decoding, Visual-Auditory Integration for Meaning, Multi-layered Meaning Decoding, and Message Comprehension, demonstrating that students combined contextual understanding with multiple listening strategies. Interview findings showed that participants verified their understanding through English subtitles, repeated listening, and careful attention to pronunciation and contextual cues rather than depending solely on written text. One participant explained that subtitles were used to confirm the intended message when unfamiliar words appeared, while another reported replaying the video while reading subtitles to refine comprehension. These findings indicate that interpretation was an active and iterative cognitive process in which students continuously monitored, verified, and reconstructed meaning, enabling them to understand authentic English presentations more accurately despite linguistic challenges.

Table 2. Thematic Analysis of TED Talks Enhance Interpretation of Spoken Messages

Data Source	Representative Quotation	Initial Code	Category	Theme
DI-R1	"...figure out what the speaker actually wants to say."	Interpreting speaker's intended meaning	Discerning Speaker Intent	TED Talks Enhance Interpretation of Spoken Messages
DI-R2	"...I usually check the subtitles first to make sure I understand the message correctly."	Verifying meaning using subtitles	Meaning Verification and Motivation Decoding	TED Talks Enhance Interpretation of Spoken Messages
DI-R3	"I read the subtitles while listening again."	Combining subtitles with repeated listening	Visual-Auditory Integration for Meaning	TED Talks Enhance Interpretation of Spoken Messages
DI-R4	"...pay more attention to pronunciation and the speaker's arguments."	Interpreting meaning through pronunciation and arguments	Multi-layered Meaning Decoding	TED Talks Enhance Interpretation of Spoken Messages
DI-R5	"...identify the main idea and understand the message."	Understanding the speaker's intended message	Message Comprehension	TED Talks Enhance Interpretation of Spoken Messages

Table 2 demonstrates that students interpreted spoken messages through multiple complementary strategies rather than relying solely on literal comprehension. The data reveal five interconnected categories: discerning the speaker's intent, verifying meaning through subtitles, integrating visual and auditory information, decoding meaning from pronunciation and arguments, and comprehending the overall message. These patterns indicate that TED Talks encouraged students to construct meaning actively by combining linguistic cues, contextual understanding, repeated listening, and subtitle support, thereby strengthening their interpretative listening skills in authentic English communication.

TED Talks Encourage Critical Evaluation

The third theme generated through thematic analysis was TED Talks Encourage Critical Evaluation. This theme reflects students' experiences in evaluating speakers' arguments, distinguishing facts from opinions, assessing supporting evidence, and reflecting on different perspectives presented in authentic English speeches. As shown in Table 3, the coding process generated four categories: Evidence Appraisal and Reflective Judgment, Substance versus

Surface Evaluation, Heightened Cognitive Alertness, and Argument Quality Assessment, representing students' critical evaluation processes.

Table 3. Thematic Analysis of TED Talks Encourage Critical Evaluation

Data Source	Representative Quotation	Initial Code	Category	Theme
DI-R1	"I usually think about the speaker's reasons, the evidence they use, and whether I agree with their opinion or not."	Evaluating arguments and supporting evidence	Evidence Appraisal and Reflective Judgment	TED Talks Encourage Critical Evaluation
DI-R2	"I don't only focus on the language anymore..."	Evaluating ideas beyond language	Substance versus Surface Evaluation	TED Talks Encourage Critical Evaluation
DI-R3	"TED Talks help me become more careful when listening."	Developing careful listening	Heightened Cognitive Alertness	TED Talks Encourage Critical Evaluation
DI-R4	"They make me pay more attention to the speaker's arguments."	Assessing argument quality	Argument Quality Assessment	TED Talks Encourage Critical Evaluation
DI-R5	"I try to distinguish facts from opinions, evaluate the speaker's evidence..."	Distinguishing facts and evaluating evidence	Objective Fact Checking and Validity Testing	TED Talks Encourage Critical Evaluation

Table 3 indicates that students engaged in critical evaluation by examining the quality of speakers' arguments rather than focusing solely on language comprehension. The interview data show that participants evaluated supporting evidence, distinguished facts from opinions, assessed the validity of arguments, and reflected on whether they agreed with the speakers' viewpoints. These responses were categorized into Evidence Appraisal and Reflective Judgment, Substance versus Surface Evaluation, Heightened Cognitive Alertness, Argument Quality Assessment, and Objective Fact Checking and Validity Testing. Collectively, the findings demonstrate that TED Talks encouraged students to adopt higher-order critical listening by analyzing evidence, questioning argument credibility, and making informed judgments about authentic spoken discourse.

Challenges and Self-Regulated Learning Strategies

The fourth theme generated through thematic analysis was Challenges and Self-Regulated Learning Strategies. Operationally, this finding refers to students' ability to overcome difficulties encountered while listening to authentic English presentations by independently selecting and applying appropriate learning strategies. In this study, self-regulated learning was reflected in students' capacity to recognize listening barriers, monitor their own comprehension, and employ various technology-assisted strategies, such as

activating English subtitles, replaying videos, pausing difficult segments, searching for unfamiliar vocabulary, and using translation tools. The coding process identified five indicators representing this autonomous learning process: Linguistic Challenges and Technology-Assisted Strategies, Vocabulary and Semantic Challenges, Auditory Repetition Strategy, Managing Conceptual Challenges, and Multi-step Self-Regulated Strategy. Collectively, these indicators demonstrate students' growing independence in managing authentic listening tasks.

Interview findings revealed that students actively regulated their learning when they encountered comprehension difficulties during TED Talks. One participant explained *"There are quite a lot of new words. Sometimes the speaker talks quite fast. I usually turn on the English subtitles first. If I'm still confused, I search for the meaning using Google Translate, and sometimes I replay the video two or three times until I finally understand it."* (DI-R2, July 4, 2026). This statement demonstrates that the participant did not perceive listening difficulties as obstacles that prevented comprehension but instead employed a sequence of self-regulated strategies to overcome them. The participant first attempted to understand the presentation through subtitles, then verified unfamiliar vocabulary using translation tools, and finally strengthened comprehension by replaying the video. The researcher interprets this behavior as evidence of metacognitive regulation in which the learner continuously monitored comprehension and selected appropriate strategies according to emerging learning needs. This process illustrates students' ability to manage authentic listening challenges through independent decision-making rather than relying on teacher intervention.

A similar pattern emerged in another interview. One participant stated *"Especially when the topic is difficult, I rewind the video several times and use subtitles to make sure I understand it."* (DI-R4, July 13, 2026). This response suggests that repeated exposure was intentionally used to improve conceptual understanding rather than merely to recognize unfamiliar vocabulary. The participant adjusted the pace of learning by revisiting complex sections until the speaker's message became clear. From the researcher's perspective, this finding reflects self-regulated learning because the participant demonstrated awareness of comprehension difficulties and independently modified learning strategies to achieve understanding. Such behavior indicates increasing learner autonomy in authentic listening activities.

Table 4. Thematic Analysis of Challenges and Self-Regulated Learning Strategies

Data Source	Representative Quotation	Initial Code	Category	Theme
DI-R1	"I usually turn on the English subtitles, pause the video, search for the meaning, and replay the difficult part..."	Using subtitles, pausing, replaying	Linguistic Challenges and Technology-Assisted Strategies	Challenges and Self-Regulated Learning Strategies

DI-R2	"I search for the meaning using Google Translate, and sometimes replay the video..."	Translation and repeated listening	Vocabulary and Semantic Challenges	Challenges and Self-Regulated Learning Strategies
DI-R3	"I replay the video several times... Sometimes I also search for new vocabulary afterwards."	Repeated listening and vocabulary search	Auditory Repetition Strategy	Challenges and Self-Regulated Learning Strategies
DI-R4	"I rewind the video several times and use subtitles..."	Replaying difficult sections	Managing Conceptual Challenges	Challenges and Self-Regulated Learning Strategies
DI-R5	"I usually use subtitles first, then search for difficult words..."	Combining multiple listening strategies	Multi-step Self-Regulated Strategy	Challenges and Self-Regulated Learning Strategies

Table 4 indicates that students responded to listening difficulties by employing a range of self-regulated learning strategies rather than relying solely on teacher assistance. The interview data show that participants used English subtitles, replayed difficult sections, paused videos, searched for unfamiliar vocabulary through dictionaries or Google Translate, and combined multiple strategies to improve comprehension. These responses were categorized into Linguistic Challenges and Technology-Assisted Strategies, Vocabulary and Semantic Challenges, Auditory Repetition Strategy, Managing Conceptual Challenges, and Multi-step Self-Regulated Strategy. Collectively, the findings demonstrate that TED Talks fostered learner autonomy by encouraging students to monitor comprehension, adapt learning strategies, and independently overcome authentic listening challenges.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that TED Talks contributed substantially to the development of EFL students' critical listening skills through four interconnected dimensions: analytical listening, interpretation of spoken messages, critical evaluation, and self-regulated learning (Chen et al., 2024; Daulay, 2025). The integration of questionnaire, interview, and observation data consistently indicates that students progressed beyond literal comprehension by analyzing discourse organization, interpreting speakers' intentions, evaluating arguments, and independently managing listening challenges (Duan & Zhao, 2025; Sari et al., 2024). These findings align with Ramadhan and Aminatun (2024), who reported that TED Talks enhance learners' ability to recognize key ideas and discourse structure (Ramadhan & Aminatun, 2024). However, the present study extends these previous findings by demonstrating that authentic listening does not merely improve comprehension but simultaneously develops multiple

dimensions of critical listening as an integrated cognitive process. Theoretically, these findings strengthen the critical listening framework proposed by Vandergrift and Goh (2012), while practically suggesting that lecturers should integrate authentic multimedia resources into listening instruction to cultivate higher-order thinking alongside language proficiency (Wuttiphan et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the findings reveal that students interpreted spoken messages through contextual reasoning rather than depending exclusively on lexical recognition. Participants consistently relied on discourse context, subtitles, repeated listening, and prior knowledge to infer speakers' intended meanings and clarify unfamiliar expressions (Sethi & Jain, 2024). These results support the findings of Upa and Muljiani (2023) who emphasized that authentic audiovisual materials facilitate contextual meaning construction and improve listening comprehension (Muawwanah & Lolita, 2026). Nevertheless, this study provides additional evidence that interpretation is not a linear decoding process but an iterative activity involving continuous verification and refinement of meaning through multiple listening strategies. This perspective complements Vandergrift and Goh's (2012) cognitive model by highlighting the interaction between contextual inference and metacognitive monitoring during authentic listening (Rivera-Mena, 2023). Practically, the findings imply that listening instruction should encourage students to interpret communicative intentions by integrating contextual clues and reflective listening strategies instead of emphasizing vocabulary memorization alone (Goh & Zhang, 2026; Yin et al., 2024).

Another important finding concerns students' development of critical evaluation while engaging with TED Talks. Participants reported examining speakers' arguments, distinguishing facts from opinions, evaluating supporting evidence, and comparing presented ideas with their own knowledge before accepting information. These findings are consistent with Maisa et al. (2024), Wahidah et al. (2026), and Tilwani et al. (2022), who concluded that authentic digital learning environments encourage higher-order thinking through reflective engagement with information. However, the present study contributes a more detailed explanation of how authentic spoken discourse stimulates evaluative thinking by encouraging students to assess argument quality and evidence credibility simultaneously during listening. This finding reinforces Facione's (1990) critical thinking framework, particularly the evaluation dimension, by demonstrating its applicability within authentic EFL listening contexts (Fadare et al., 2024; Sambhav & Chen, 2022). From a practical perspective, integrating TED Talks into listening classrooms may promote not only language comprehension but also evidence-based reasoning, reflective judgment, and informed decision-making, competencies that are increasingly essential for twenty-first-century learners.

The findings also demonstrate that authentic listening materials naturally presented linguistic and conceptual challenges, including unfamiliar vocabulary, rapid speech, diverse accents, and complex topics (Hanafi et al., 2021). Rather than discouraging students, these challenges motivated them to employ self-

regulated learning strategies such as replaying videos, activating subtitles, consulting dictionaries, and monitoring their own comprehension. These findings support Ramadhan Aminatun (2024), who reported that authentic listening experiences foster learner autonomy through strategic listening behaviors (Ramadhan & Aminatun, 2024). Nevertheless, the present study extends previous research by illustrating that students combined several complementary strategies into a systematic self-regulated learning process instead of relying on isolated techniques. This finding further supports Vandergrift and Goh's (2012) metacognitive listening theory, emphasizing that successful listening depends on continuous planning, monitoring, and evaluation. Consequently, authentic listening instruction should provide opportunities for students to develop strategic autonomy alongside listening proficiency (Goh & Zhang, 2026).

Overall, the present study contributes both theoretically and practically to the field of English language education by demonstrating that TED Talks function as an authentic learning resource capable of simultaneously developing multiple dimensions of critical listening. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on listening comprehension or vocabulary acquisition, this research provides empirical evidence that analytical listening, interpretation, critical evaluation, and self-regulated learning operate as interconnected processes during authentic listening activities. This integrated perspective expands current understanding of critical listening by positioning authentic audiovisual materials as catalysts for higher-order cognitive engagement rather than merely sources of language input. Practically, the findings encourage English lecturers to incorporate TED Talks into listening courses using structured analytical, interpretative, evaluative, and reflective learning tasks. Such instructional practices may better prepare EFL students to critically interpret authentic spoken communication while fostering independent learning habits necessary for lifelong language development.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that TED Talks serve not only as authentic listening materials but also as a pedagogical medium that fosters EFL students' critical listening through four interconnected processes: analytical listening, interpretation of spoken messages, critical evaluation, and self-regulated learning. The most important insight is that meaningful engagement with authentic spoken discourse encourages students to move beyond literal comprehension toward reflective, evidence-based, and autonomous listening. This study contributes to the literature by providing an integrated qualitative explanation of how authentic digital resources simultaneously support higher-order listening skills and learner autonomy in EFL higher education, thereby extending existing perspectives that primarily emphasize listening comprehension. Nevertheless, the findings are limited by the relatively small sample and single institutional context. Future studies should involve more diverse participants, multiple educational settings, and mixed-methods or

experimental designs to examine the effectiveness of TED Talks across different EFL contexts and broader higher-order thinking outcomes.

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