

## Discovering EFL Graduate Students' Difficulties And Strategies During Self-Directed Web-Based Listening Activities

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### Abstract

*This research was conducted to discover the difficulties faced and the strategies employed by students of the Master of English Language Education Study Program during self-directed web-based listening activities at the B2, C1, and C2 levels of CEFR. In this research, the researcher involved 8 students of the Master of English Language Education Study Program at a state university in Indonesia who enrolled in the same class for the English Proficiency for Teachers course. During the course, the students autonomously developed their listening proficiency. At the same time, the students were asked to report their results of listening activities while also identifying and reporting the difficulties they faced and the strategies to overcome the difficulties during the listening activities in the form of task reports and self-reflective writing. The researcher employed the content analysis method to explore the reflective writing and reports written by the students of the Master of English Language Education Study Program to discover the difficulties they faced and the listening strategies they employed. The students' reflections were analyzed to set the rubric for discovering their difficulties and strategies. Then, the researcher used the rubric as an instrument to analyze the data. As a result, this research has confirmed that students of the Master of English Language Education Study Program faced various difficulties and employed various strategies during the self-directed web-based listening activities at the B2, C1, and C2 levels of CEFR. This research also provides valuable insight for anyone in the English language education field.*

**Keywords:** EFL, Self-Directed Learning, Self-Reflection and Web-Based Listening.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Listening has long been perceived as a critical element of language learning considering the crucial role of listening in both academic and real-life contexts. Language learners must develop their listening skills to enhance their ability to be able to communicate effectively. Astuti & Sulistyaningrum (2023) explained that “developing listening skills could help to ensure an understanding of the information correctly, interpret messages accurately, and optimize communication effectively and efficiently”. On the same line, UNICEF (2022) emphasized that listening as part of communication holds a crucial role in avoiding misunderstanding, especially in multicultural contexts. Therefore, effective communication in the target language is now the ultimate goal of language learning, and developing this ability is a must (Pennycook, 2017) since the students must be able to communicate and cooperate in multicultural settings in the future. Fortunately, along with technological advancement, language learners can learn and train their listening skills autonomously by using digital platforms provided on the internet. This situation is in line with the language learning and teaching in the 21st century that has shifted from a teacher-centered to a student-centered approach. This shift emphasizes the importance of student autonomy in learning (Muhammad, 2020). Therefore, being autonomous learners is the most essential property for students (Holec, 1981). The basic principle behind autonomous learning is that learners are encouraged to take responsibility for their education (Cotterall, 2000; Muhammad, 2020; & Sanprasert, 2009), which means that students are also given opportunities to have various listening activities, identify their difficulties while also employ various strategies to overcome their difficulties during their listening activities.

This shift also requires lecturers at the tertiary education level to provide students with crucial skills such as technology and digital literacy, critical thinking, autonomy, and problem-solving skills. Technology and digital literacy are critical for students since they must be proficient in using digital devices to be able to access the internet to discover, create, review, evaluate, and use information through various digital platforms. At the same time, students must be equipped with critical thinking and problem-solving skills to

deal with various challenges or real-world problems. Thus, learners' autonomy is crucial for self-directed learners nowadays. On the other side, due to a variety of factors, EFL students frequently struggle with listening comprehension. Students may find listening difficult when they face the rapid pace and rhythm of speakers' speech, unfamiliar accents, dialects, and intonation patterns, and limited knowledge of vocabulary and grammar (Vandergrift, 2007; Yang, 2020). Research conducted by Yang (2020) revealed that the top 3 difficulties faced by students during listening activities in self-directed learning settings are unfamiliar words, phrases, and idioms, the speaker's accent, and the speaker's pace of speaking. Similarly, Sari & Fithriyana (2019) revealed that EFL students find it difficult to understand the utterance due to the speaker's fast pace and dialect. Moreover, the data showed that the students also had difficulty concentrating, making inferences, and predicting what would come next.

In another research that investigated listening activities in self-directed learning settings, Ozcelik, Van den Branden, & Van Steendam (2023) who involved Twenty-eight A1 level Turkish secondary school students found that the inability to chunk speech streams, mental translation, and failure to keep up with the delivery were the most common issues. Meanwhile in Indonesia, Rabbani & Sulistyaningrum (2022) found that students in the Master of English Language Education Study Program still faced difficulties in performing listening skills at B2 and C1 levels of CEFR during their self-directed listening activities whereas they must be able to perform listening comprehension performance equivalent to C1 level of CEFR as master students. These facts show that the need for the development of listening skills is undeniable. Students' listening difficulties resulted from their use of ineffective strategies (Namaziandost, Ahmadi, & Keshmirshakan, 2019; Rajab & Nimehchisalem, 2016). On the other side, the employment of effective strategies helps the students improve their proficiency (Arroyani, 2015; Bozorgian & Pilla, 2013; & Coskun, 2010). Therefore, it is crucial to discover students' listening difficulties and strategies to overcome the recurring problems. Although there are valuable studies conducted to address listening skills and self-directed learning, there has been yet a study conducted to reveal master students' difficulties and strategies during self-directed web-based listening activities at B2, C1, and C2 levels of CEFR.

Therefore, this research attempted to fill the gap. This research was conducted in a Master of English Language Education Study Program at a state university in Indonesia. In this research, to discover the difficulties faced and the strategies employed by students of the Magister of English Language Education study program during self-directed web-based listening activities at the B2, C1, and C2 levels of CEFR, the researcher employed a content analysis method to analyze the qualitative data. The platforms used in this research are Exam English which can be accessed at <https://www.examenglish.com> as the provider of web-based listening activities and Google Classroom as the LMS that facilitates the students to write their reflections. The researcher explored the reflective writing and reports written by the students of the Master of English Language Education study program, including the difficulties they faced and the listening strategies they employed during self-directed web-based listening activities. The students' reflections were analyzed to set the rubric to discover the difficulties faced and strategies employed by the students. Then, the researcher used the rubric as an instrument. To address the objectives of the research, the researcher focused the investigation on answering the following questions:

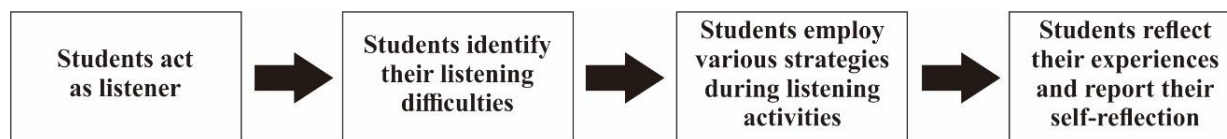
1. What are the difficulties faced by Students of the Master of English Language Education study program in self-directed web-based listening activities? and;
2. What are the strategies employed by Students of the Master of English Language Education study program in self-directed web-based listening activities?

This research will be greatly beneficial in overcoming the challenges that persist in listening activities for students, teachers, and anyone else involved in English language education. Further, this research also gives valuable insights for anyone in the English language education field.

## II. METHODS

This research was conducted in the Master of English Language Education study program of a state university in Indonesia. To address the research objectives, the researcher employed content analysis to explore some given qualitative data. In this research, there were 8 students of the Master of English

Language Education Study Program of batch 2022 at a state university in Indonesia involved since they enrolled in the same class in the English Proficiency for Teachers course in the 2022/2023 academic year. In this course, the students develop their English proficiency. Specifically in this research, their listening proficiency development was the focus of the research.



**Fig 1.** Stages of Self-Directed Listening Activities at B2, C1, and C2 Levels of CEFR

Figure 1 above shows the stages in the self-directed web-based listening activities at B2, C1, and C2 levels of CEFR in the English Proficiency for Teacher course. During the course, the students were asked to do several listening activities at the B2, C1, and C2 levels of CEFR provided at <https://www.examenglish.com>. Then, the students have to identify the difficulties they faced and the strategies they employed during the listening activities in the form of task reports and self-reflection reports. The task reports and self-reflection reports became the data sources in this research. The researcher explored the self-reflection reports written by 8 students of the Master of English Language Education study program to identify the problem faced and the strategies employed by the students during the self-directed web-based listening activities at the B2, C1, and C2 levels of CEFR provided at <https://www.examenglish.com>. The students' reflections were analyzed to set the rubric to discover the difficulties faced and strategies employed by the students. Then, the researcher used the rubric as an instrument. The text must be coded, or divided into easily manageable code categories, to be analyzed using content analysis (Holsti, 1968).

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part of the article describes the results of the investigation of the difficulties faced and the strategies employed by the students of the Master of English Language Education study program during the self-directed web-based listening activities at the B2, C1, and C2 levels of CEFR.

#### a. The result of the identification of the students' difficulties

After several weeks of the course, the data was fully collected by the researcher. Based on the data that have been analyzed by the researcher, the researcher found that students of the Master of English Language Education study program faced difficulties during their self-directed web-based listening activities. The difficulties faced by students of the Master of English Language Education study program include emotional discomfort, difficulty in finding the keyword, difficulty in identifying the speaker's implied meaning, difficulty in making inferences, lack of focus, lack of listening strategies, fatigue of long spoken text, distracted by noise, inability to understand speaker's utterance due to speaker's speaking pace and clarity, unfamiliar topic, inability to identify main idea and specific information, and lack of vocabulary. The identification of difficulties faced by students of the Master of English Language Education study program during self-directed web-based listening activities at the B2, C1, and C2 levels of CEFR are presented in Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3 as follows.

**Table 1.** Identification of Students' Difficulties in Listening B2

IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN LISTENING B2									
DIFFICULTIES	STUDENT								TOTAL
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	
Emotional Discomfort					✓				1
Finding Keyword	✓		✓				✓		3
Implied Meaning								✓	1
Inferencing Difficulty									
Lack of Focus						✓			1
Lack of Listening Strategy		✓							1
Fatigue of Long-Spoken Text						✓		✓	2
Main Idea Identification									
Misheard the word				✓					1
Morphology									

Noise Distraction	✓						✓		2
Speaker's Speaking Clarity	✓		✓						2
Speaker's Speaking Speed		✓		✓		✓		✓	4
Specific (detail) Information	✓					✓	✓		3
Unfamiliar Topic				✓					1
Lack of Vocabulary Knowledge	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	5

Table 1 shows us that lack of vocabulary knowledge (n=5) is the most common difficulty experienced by students of the Master of English Language Education study program during self-directed web-based listening activities at the B2 level of CEFR. On the other side, the inability to understand the speaker's utterance due to the speaker's speaking pace (n=4) is ranked second as the most common difficulty experienced by students of the Master of English Language Education study program, followed by the inability to identify specific information (n=3), identified the keyword (n=3), and the other difficulties. Further, during the self-directed web-based listening activities at the C1 level of CEFR, students of the Master of English Language Education study program also faced difficulties. The difficulties identified in self-directed web-based listening activities at the C1 level of CEFR are presented in Table 2 below.

**Table 2.** Identification of Students' Difficulties in Listening C1

IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN LISTENING C1									
DIFFICULTIES	STUDENT								TOTAL
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	
Emotional Discomfort									
Finding Keyword			✓		✓				2
Implied Meaning	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	7
Inferencing Difficulty						✓			1
Lack of Focus					✓				1
Lack of Listening Strategy		✓							1
Fatigue of Long-Spoken Text	✓							✓	2
Main Idea Identification			✓			✓	✓		3
Misheard the word	✓				✓				2
Morphology					✓		✓		2
Noise Distraction	✓								1
Speaker's Speaking Clarity	✓								1
Speaker's Speaking Speed		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	5
Specific (detail) Information						✓	✓		2
Unfamiliar Topic									
Lack of Vocabulary Knowledge		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	5

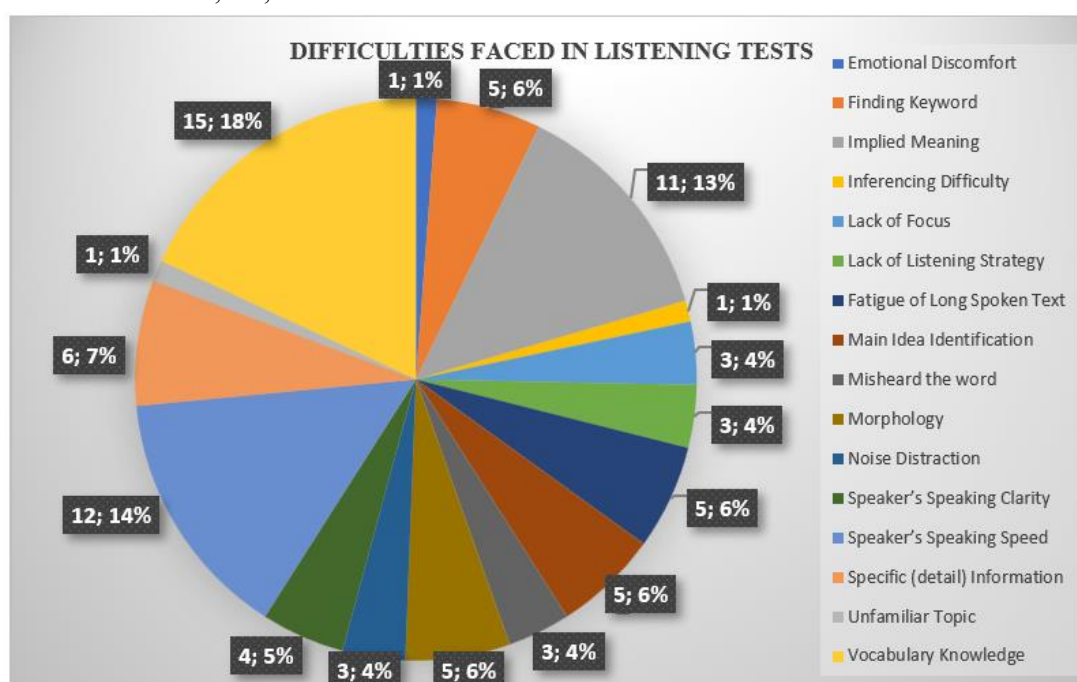
Table 2 shows us that the inability to understand the speaker's implied meaning (n=7) is the most common difficulty experienced by students of the Master of English Language Education study program during the self-directed web-based listening activities at the C1 level of CEFR. On the other side, the inability to understand a speaker's utterance due to the speaker's speaking pace (n=5) and lack of vocabulary (n=5) are ranked second as the most common difficulty experienced by students of Master of English Language Education study program followed by inability to identify main idea (n=3) and the other difficulties. Furthermore, as presented in Table 3 below, the most common difficulty faced by students of the Master of English Language Education study program during the self-directed web-based listening activities at the C2 level of CEFR is a lack of vocabulary knowledge (n=5). Inability to identify the speaker's implied meaning (n=3), the word's form or morphology (n=3), and understand the speaker's utterance due to the speaker's speaking pace (n=3) followed in the second place. The number of other difficulties faced by the students during self-directed web-based listening activities at the C2 level of CEFR is also presented in the following table.

**Table 3.** Identification of Students' Difficulties in Listening C2

IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN LISTENING C2									
DIFFICULTIES	STUDENT								TOTAL
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	
Emotional Discomfort									
Finding Keyword									
Implied Meaning	✓				✓			✓	3

Inferencing Difficulty									
Lack of Focus				✓					1
Lack of Listening Strategy		✓							1
Fatigue of Long-Spoken Text							✓		1
Main Idea Identification						✓	✓		2
Misheard the word									
Morphology			✓	✓	✓				3
Noise Distraction									
Speaker's Speaking Clarity				✓					1
Speaker's Speaking Speed		✓		✓				✓	3
Specific (detail) Information							✓		1
Unfamiliar Topic									
Lack of Vocabulary Knowledge		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	5

The pie chart below shows the difficulties faced by students of the Master of English Language Education study program during the self-directed web-based listening activities, including the number of times these difficulties appeared in the students' self-reflection report data of self-directed web-based listening activities at the B2, C1, and C2 levels of CEFR.



**Fig 2.** Difficulties Faced by Students During Self-Directed Web-Based Listening Activities at B2, C1, and C2 Levels of CEFR

From the pie chart above, lack of vocabulary knowledge ( $n=15$ ) is the most common difficulty faced by students of the Master of English Language Education study program during self-directed web-based listening activities at the B2, C1, and C2 levels of CEFR, followed by the inability to understand the speaker's utterance due to speaker's speaking pace ( $n=12$ ) in the second place, the inability to identify speaker's implied meaning in the third place ( $n=11$ ), and the other difficulties.

#### **b. The result of the identification of students' strategies**

Besides the students' difficulties, the researchers listed the strategies employed by the students during self-directed web-based listening activities. Researchers found that strategies employed by students of the Master of English Language Education study program including avoiding distraction, avoiding interruption, focusing on detailed information, guessing, having more practice, identifying implied meaning, identifying the main idea, identifying keywords, identifying synonyms, identifying word's form, inferencing, note-taking, predicting, read the question first, reconstructing meaning, translating, and visualizing. The identification of these strategies in students' listening activities is presented in the table identification of students' strategies during self-directed web-based listening activities at the B2, C1, and C2 levels of CEFR are presented in Table 4, Table 5, and Table 6 as follows.



**Table 4.** Identification of Students' Strategies in Listening B2

IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS' STRATEGIES IN LISTENING B2									
STRATEGIES	STUDENT								TOTAL
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	
Avoid Distraction	✓								1
Avoid Interruption		✓							1
Focus on Detailed Information					✓	✓	✓	✓	4
Focus on the speaker's Utterances		✓						✓	2
Guessing								✓	1
Having More Practices		✓							1
Identified Implied Meaning				✓					1
Identified Main Idea									
Identified Keyword	✓		✓	✓			✓		4
Identified synonym							✓		1
Identified Word's Form								✓	1
Inferencing								✓	1
Note-Taking								✓	1
Predicting								✓	1
Read the Question First									
Reconstruct Meaning		✓							1
Translation						✓			1
Visualization				✓					1

Table 4 above shows us that focusing on detailed information (n=4) and identifying keywords (n=4) are the most common strategies employed by students of the Master of English Language Education study program during self-directed web-based listening activities at the B2 level of CEFR. On the other side, the attempt to focus on the speaker's utterance (n=2) is ranked second as the most common strategy employed by students of the Master of English Language Education study program followed by the other strategies. Further, during the self-directed web-based listening activities at the C1 level of CEFR, students of the Master of English Language Education study program also employed various strategies. The identification of students' strategies during self-directed web-based listening activities at the C1 level of CEFR is presented in Table 5 below.

**Table 5.** Identification of Students' Strategies in Listening C1

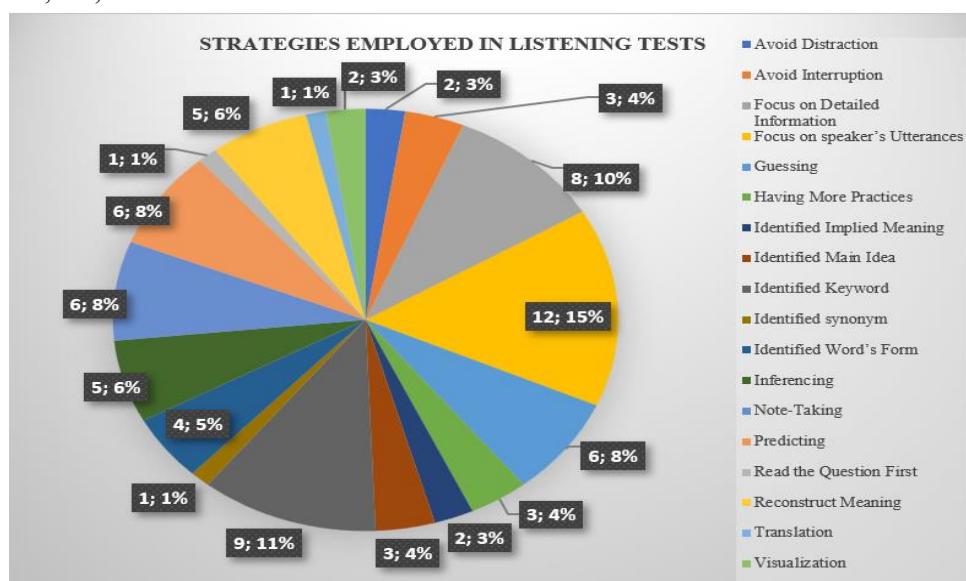
IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS' STRATEGIES IN LISTENING C1									
STRATEGIES	STUDENT								TOTAL
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	
Avoid Distraction	✓								1
Avoid Interruption		✓							1
Focus on Detailed Information	✓					✓		✓	3
Focus on the speaker's Utterances	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	3
Guessing	✓		✓	✓				✓	4
Having More Practices		✓							1
Identified Implied Meaning									
Identified Keyword			✓						1
Identified Main Idea						✓	✓		2
Identified synonym									
Identified Word's Form						✓		✓	2
Inferencing	✓					✓		✓	3
Note-Taking	✓				✓		✓		3
Predicting	✓		✓			✓		✓	4
Read the Question First	✓								1
Reconstruct Meaning		✓						✓	2
Translation									
Visualization					✓				1

As we can see in Table 5, guessing (n=4) and predicting (n=4) are the most common strategies employed by the students of the Master of English Language Education study program during self-directed web-based listening activities at the C1 level of CEFR. Focus on detailed information (n=3), focus on speakers' utterance (n=3), inferencing (n=3), and note-taking (n=3) are the second common strategies employed by the students in this test, followed by the other strategies. Meanwhile, during self-directed web-based listening activities at the C2 level of CEFR, as presented in Table 6 below, the most common strategies employed by the students of the Master of English Language Education study program are focused on the speaker's utterances (n=7), followed by identification of the main idea (n=3) in the second place, identification of keyword (n=2) and note-taking (n=2) in the third place, and the other strategies.

**Table 6.** Identification of Students' Strategies in Listening C2

IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS' STRATEGIES IN LISTENING C2									
STRATEGIES	STUDENT								TOTAL
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	
Avoid Distraction									
Avoid Interruption		✓							1
Focus on Detailed Information								✓	1
Focus on the speaker's Utterances		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	7
Guessing								✓	1
Having More Practices		✓							1
Identified Implied Meaning	✓								1
Identified Keyword			✓	✓					2
Identified Main Idea						✓	✓		3
Identified synonym									
Identified Word's Form					✓				1
Inferencing								✓	1
Note-Taking								✓	2
Predicting								✓	1
Read the Question First									
Reconstruct Meaning		✓						✓	2
Translation									
Visualization									

The pie chart below shows the strategies employed by students of the Master of English Language Education study program during self-directed web-based listening activities, including the number of times these strategies appeared in the students' self-reflection report data of self-directed web-based listening activities at the B2, C1, and C2 levels of CEFR.

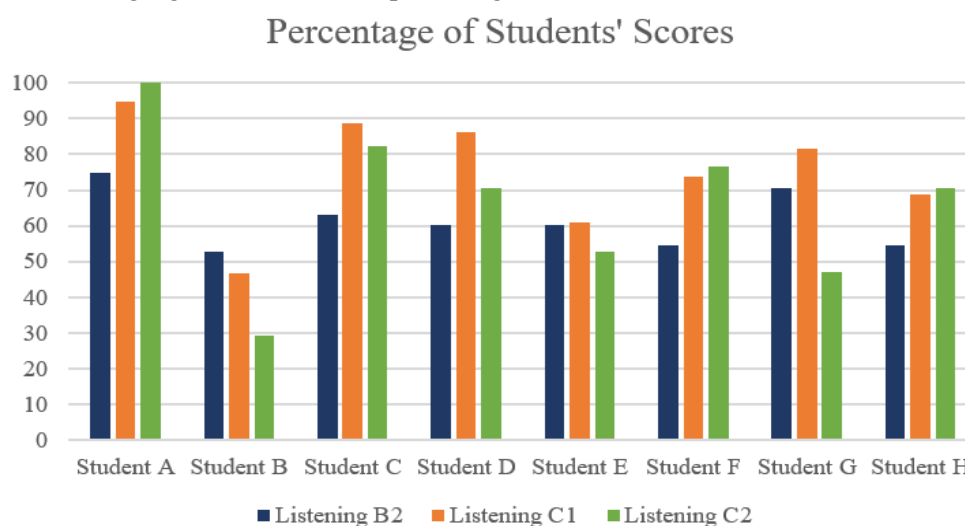


**Fig 3.** Strategies Employed by Students During Self-Directed Web-Based Listening Activities at B2, C1, and C2 Levels of CEFR

From the pie chart above, focus on the speaker's utterance (n=12) is the most common strategy employed by students of Magister of English Language Education during Listening B2, Listening C1, and Listening C2 tests, followed by identification of keyword (n=9) in the second place, focus on detailed information in the third place (n=8), and the other strategies.

### c. The results of the identification of the students' scores

Another interesting finding in this research is the students' scores during the self-directed learning activities. The following figure illustrates the percentage of the students' scores.



**Fig 4.** Percentage of Students' Scores During Self-Directed Listening Activities at B2, C1, and C2 Levels of CEFR

Figure 4 above displays the percentage of the students' scores during self-directed listening activities at B2, C1, and C2 levels of CEFR. From Figure 4 above, we can see that Student A achieved the highest scores (average: 89,93) and Student B achieved the lowest scores (average: 43,06). The figure also shows the highest scores achieved by Student A during listening activities at the C2 level of CEFR (percentage: 100%) and the lowest scores achieved by Student B during listening activities at the C2 level of CEFR (percentage: 29,4%).

### d. Discussion

The first question in this research sought to discover the difficulties faced by the students of the Master of English Language Education study program during self-directed listening activities. The results of the first research question confirmed several studies that have addressed students' difficulties in listening comprehension such as Ali (2020), Bloomfield et al (2010), Ferdiat, Nawawi, & Ruhaniah (2021), Ozcelik, Van den Branden, & Van Steendam (2023), and Rabbani & Sulistyningrum (2022), Saraswaty (2018), Sari & Fithriyana (2019), Vandergrift (2007), and Yang (2020). The research conducted by Ali (2020) found that students at the tertiary level still faced listening difficulties such as unfamiliar words (idiom, jargon, and slang), complex grammatical structure, long spoken text, unfamiliar topics, difficulty recognizing linguistic features of the text (prosodic features, signal word use, and unknown word use), failure to concentrate (loss of concentration, poor audio quality, and focus loss due to the effort to understand every single spoken word), difficulties related to the listener (difficulties on listening and prediction, to stream of speech, to fear and anxiety, and to lack interest), difficulty related to the speaker (difficulties on hesitations and pauses, to unclear pronunciation, to a variety of accents, and to stress and intonation), difficulties related to physical setting (difficulties on internal and external noises and to poor quality tape recording). Then, research conducted by Bloomfield et al (2010) revealed several factors that affect students' listening comprehension. Based on their findings, students' listening comprehension is affected by the characteristics of the students (students' working memory capacity, the effectiveness of metacognitive strategies employed by the students, students' experience, and students' anxiety), the characteristics of the text (the length of the text, the complexity of the text, the organization of the text, and the features of the audio), and the characteristics of the testing condition (the time limits and the number and timing of hearing).



Furthermore, Ferdiat, Nawawi, & Ruhaniah (2021) and Saraswati (2018) found that major difficulties faced by students in listening include the quality of recorder materials, cultural differences, accent, unfamiliar vocabulary, and length and speed of listening. Ozcelik, Van den Branden, & Van Steendam (2023) found that the inability to chunk speech streams, mental translation, and failure to keep up with the delivery were the most common issues. Research conducted by Rabbani & Sulistyaningrum (2022) revealed that EFL students in the Magister of English Language Education study program still faced listening difficulties. They found it difficult to deal with the length and the complexity of the audio, the native speakers' accents, and their lack of vocabulary. Sari & Fithriyana (2019) also revealed that they found EFL students faced listening difficulties such as difficulty concentrating, making inferences, predicting what would come next, and understanding the utterance due to the speaker's fast pace and dialect. Vandergrift (2010) and Yang (2020) argued that students may find listening difficult when they face the rapid pace and rhythm of native speakers' speech, unfamiliar accents, dialects, and intonation patterns, and limited knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. These findings answer the first research question by discovering the difficulties faced by the students during the self-directed listening activities at the B2, C1, and C2 levels of CEFR. The most unexpected finding from these activities is the lack of vocabulary knowledge is the most common difficulty faced by students of Magister of English Language Education. Then, the inability to understand the speaker's utterance due to the speaker's speaking pace follows in the second place, and the inability to identify the speaker's implied meaning in the third place. These results show that there is still room for improvement in students' listening skills, beginning with vocabulary knowledge, which is the most fundamental element.

These facts confirmed the findings found by scholars in their research. It will be extremely challenging to follow the speaker's speech if they don't have a lot of vocabulary in their background knowledge. Therefore, it is crucial for students to keep learning and develop their English proficiency. The second research question in this research sought to discover the strategies employed by the students of the Master of English Language Education study program during self-directed listening activities at B2, C1, and C2 levels of CEFR. Several research unveiled that the employment of strategies during listening activities provides a positive impact on students' listening proficiency (Arroyyani, 2021; Bidabadi & Yamat, 2011; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016; and Rakhman, Tarjana, & Marmanto, 2019). Bidabadi & Yamat (2011) revealed that there was a significant positive correlation between the listening strategies employed by advanced, intermediate, and lower-intermediate freshmen and their listening proficiency levels. Furthermore, these findings confirmed several studies that have addressed students' strategies in listening comprehension (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016; Rakhman, Tarjana, & Marmanto, 2019; Arroyyani, 2021). Gilakjani & Sabouri (2016) and Arroyyani (2021) revealed that students employed several strategies in listening including cognitive strategy (such as identification of keywords, etc), metacognitive strategy (such as reconstructing meaning by questioning, etc), and socio-affective strategy (such as try to relax and avoid anxiety). Rakhman, Tarjana, & Marmanto (2019) found that Indonesian English Department Students employed several strategies to overcome the difficulties they faced during listening including note-taking, skipping, and using imagery. These findings answer the second research question by discovering the strategies employed by the students during the self-directed listening activities at the B2, C1, and C2 levels of CEFR.

The findings revealed that students employed various strategies during their listening activities. Interestingly, in contrast to scholars who argue that the employment of various strategies during listening activities provides a positive impact on students' listening proficiency, we can see that the overall highest scores achieved by Student A (percentage: 100%) as shown in Figure 4 in the C2 listening activities while Table 6 shows us that Student A employed only one strategy (identified implied meaning). At the same time, the lowest scores from the overall listening activities were achieved by Student B at the C2 listening activities (percentage: 29,4%), shown in Figure 4, while the student employed various strategies during the activities, shown in Table 6. But this striking finding confirmed the argument of several scholars who argue that students' listening difficulties result from their use of ineffective strategies (Namaziandost, Ahmadi, & Keshmirshakan, 2019; Rajab & Nimehchisalem, 2016), while the employment of effective strategies helps the students improve their proficiency (Bozorgian & Pilla, 2013; Coskun, 2010; & Arroyyani, 2015). From

these findings, we can see that not every strategy works to solve all problems; however, as we become aware of which strategy to use, it can help us resolve the current problems. Therefore, students must understand that besides striving for good scores they also must be able to solve every difficulty they face by employing the most appropriate and effective strategy for them that suit the difficulties.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

This research set out to investigate the difficulties faced and strategies employed by students of the Master of English Language Education study program during the self-directed web-based listening activities at the B2, C1, and C2 levels of CEFR. This study has confirmed that students of the Master of English Language Education study program faced various difficulties during self-directed web-based listening activities. The most unexpected finding from these activities is the lack of vocabulary knowledge is the most common difficulty faced by students, followed by the inability to understand the speaker's utterance due to the speaker's speaking pace, and the inability to identify the speaker's implied meaning. These evidences indicate that the need for the development of the students' listening proficiency is undeniable. Further, this research also discovered the various strategies employed by the students during their listening activities. From these findings, we can see that not every strategy works to solve all problems; however, as we become aware of which strategy to use, it can help us resolve the current problems. Overall, this research strengthens the idea that learners' autonomy holds a crucial role in developing students' English proficiency. Since the study focused on the discovery of a small number of students' difficulties and strategies in listening, the researcher admitted that this research provided limited information. However, the findings of this study have several important implications for English language teaching and learning in the future. The researchers suggest further research needs to examine more closely the links between the difficulties faced and the strategies employed by students.

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