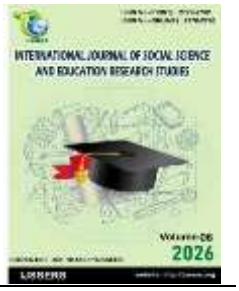
International Journal of Social Science and Education Research Studies

ISSN(print): 2770-2782, ISSN(online): 2770-2790

Volume 06 Issue 03 March 2026

DOI: https://doi.org/10.55677/ijssers/V06I03Y2026-12, Impact Factor: 7.573

Page No : 329-338



The Effectiveness of Task-Based Listening Instruction in Improving Listening Comprehension of First-Year EFL University Students

Tri Rositasari[1], Rini Susanti[2], Rona Monica[3]

[1,2,3] Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

The research evaluates Task-Based Learning (TBL) effectiveness for enhancing listening skills of first-semester students who study English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Despite the importance of listening comprehension in second language acquisition, many EFL learners struggle to understand spoken English due to limited vocabulary knowledge, fast speech rate, and insufficient exposure to authentic listening activities. The research study investigates task-based listening activities which help students develop active listening skills through their participation in practical communication exercises. The study used a pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design which tested fourteen students who studied English Education at an Indonesian university. The researchers collected data using listening comprehension tests which were given to students at two different times along with classroom observations and a student perception questionnaire. The instructional treatment included eight sessions of task-based listening training. The results demonstrated a major improvement in student listening abilities. The mean listening score rose from 57.14 in the pre-test to 78.57 in the post-test. A paired-sample t-test confirmed that the improvement showed statistical significance with a t-value of 10.82 and a p-value of less than 0.001 and the result achieved a large effect size according to Cohen's d value of 3.05. The research findings demonstrate that task-based listening instruction improves student participation while it helps students build their listening comprehension abilities. The researchers recommend conducting additional research with larger participant groups and experimental study methods.

Published Online: March 23, 2026

KEYWORDS:

communicative language teaching; EFL learners; listening comprehension; task-based learning; university EFL context.

1. INTRODUCTION

Listening comprehension is a central component of second language acquisition because it provides learners with essential linguistic input for language development. Through listening activities, learners are exposed to pronunciation patterns, vocabulary usage, grammatical structures, and discourse features that support the development of other language skills such as speaking and reading. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, listening is often the primary channel through which learners encounter authentic language input. Consequently, the ability to comprehend spoken English is widely considered a key element of communicative competence (Vandergrift & Goh, 2019; Nation & Newton, 2020).

Corresponding Author: Rini Susanti

Cite this Article: Rositasari, T., Susanti, R., Monica, R. (2026). The Effectiveness of Task-Based Listening Instruction in Improving Listening Comprehension of First-Year EFL University Students. International Journal of Social Science and Education Research Studies, 6(3), 329-338

Despite its importance, listening remains one of the most challenging skills for many EFL learners. Previous studies indicate that learners frequently struggle with rapid speech, unfamiliar accents, reduced forms, and limited vocabulary knowledge (Field, 2018; Aryadoust, 2023). Listening comprehension also requires complex cognitive processes involving both bottom-up and top-down processing. Bottom-up processing involves decoding linguistic signals such as sounds and words, while top-down processing requires the use of contextual knowledge and inferencing to construct meaning (Goh & Aryadoust, 2021). When learners lack sufficient linguistic knowledge or strategic listening skills, these processes become difficult to manage.

Another challenge lies in the instructional practices commonly used in EFL classrooms. Traditional listening instruction often emphasizes comprehension testing rather than the development of listening strategies. Students may simply listen to recordings and answer questions without receiving guidance on how to process spoken input

effectively (Graham et al., 2018). As a result, learners may become passive listeners who rely on guessing rather than actively engaging in the listening process.

Recent research highlights the importance of metacognitive strategies in improving listening comprehension. These strategies include planning, monitoring, and evaluating during listening tasks. Learners who employ metacognitive strategies are better able to regulate their comprehension processes and manage cognitive load while listening (Goh & Aryadoust, 2021; Fu et al., 2023). Instruction that integrates strategy development into listening activities can therefore support more effective listening performance. Previous studies have also shown that metacognitive listening strategies can significantly support students' listening performance (Al-Khresheh, 2024).

Task-Based Learning (TBL) has been widely proposed as an effective approach for promoting active language use and learner engagement. In task-based classrooms, learners' complete meaningful tasks such as problem solving, information exchange, and collaborative discussions that require the use of language for communicative purposes (Ellis, 2021; Willis & Willis, 2021). Through these tasks, learners interact with language input while focusing on meaning, which may facilitate language acquisition.

In listening instruction, task-based activities encourage learners to actively process spoken input rather than simply answer comprehension questions. For example, learners may identify key information, complete information gaps, or solve problems based on listening texts. These activities promote deeper engagement with listening materials and provide opportunities for learners to apply listening strategies during meaningful tasks (Cross, 2021).

Although previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of Task-Based Learning in language instruction, research focusing specifically on task-based listening instruction in university-level EFL contexts remains limited. Many higher education institutions still rely on traditional listening practices that emphasize comprehension testing rather than strategy development. Therefore, further research is needed to examine the effectiveness of task-based listening instruction in improving students' listening comprehension.

This study aims to investigate whether the implementation of Task-Based Learning can significantly improve the listening comprehension of first-semester EFL students. In addition, the study explores students' perceptions of task-based listening activities implemented during the instructional process.

2. METHOD

This study employed a pre-experimental research design using a one-group pretest–posttest model to investigate the effectiveness of Task-Based Learning (TBL) in improving students' listening comprehension. In this design, the same group of participants was tested before and after the instructional intervention. The pre-test measured students' initial listening comprehension ability, while the post-test assessed their listening performance after the implementation of task-based listening instruction (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By comparing the scores obtained from the pre-test and post-test, the study aimed to determine whether the instructional intervention produced a significant improvement in students' listening comprehension.

2.1 Participants

The participants of this study consisted of fourteen first-semester students enrolled in the English Education Study Program at a university in Indonesia. Total sampling was employed because the class size was relatively small and all students in the class participated in the study. The students were categorized as beginner to lower-intermediate learners of English based on their previous English learning experience in secondary school. Many of them reported difficulties in understanding spoken English, particularly when listening to authentic audio materials. These challenges made the group suitable participants for examining the effectiveness of task-based listening instruction.

2.2 Instruments

Three instruments were used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data: a listening comprehension test, classroom observation, and a student perception questionnaire. The listening comprehension test was the primary instrument used to measure students' ability to understand spoken English. The test included several listening tasks designed to assess three listening sub-skills: identifying main ideas, understanding specific information, and interpreting meaning from spoken texts. The test was administered twice during the study. The pre-test measured students' listening comprehension ability before the instructional treatment, while the post-test measured their listening performance after the implementation of task-based listening instruction. The listening materials were adapted from intermediate-level listening resources commonly used in EFL classrooms, and the test consisted of objective items with fixed scoring to ensure consistency in assessment. The listening comprehension test was reviewed by two experts in English language teaching to ensure content validity. In addition, a pilot test was conducted with a group of students who had similar characteristics to the participants in order to check the clarity of the test items. The reliability of the test was examined using Cronbach's alpha, which indicated acceptable internal consistency.

Classroom observation was conducted during the instructional sessions to examine how task-based listening activities were implemented and how students participated in the learning tasks. The observations provided additional insights into students' engagement with listening materials

and their interaction with peers during task completion. A student perception questionnaire was administered after the instructional intervention to explore students' responses to the use of Task-Based Learning in listening instruction. The questionnaire included several statements related to students' engagement, motivation, and perceived improvement in listening comprehension.

2.3 Instructional Procedure

The instructional treatment consisted of eight sessions of task-based listening instruction, each lasting approximately 90 minutes. The instructional procedures followed the Task-Based Learning framework proposed by Willis and Willis (2021), which includes three main stages: pre-task, task cycle, and language focus.

During the pre-task stage, the teacher introduced the topic of the listening activity and activated students' prior knowledge related to the topic. Students discussed the topic, predicted the possible content of the listening materials, and became familiar with key vocabulary that would appear in the listening tasks.

In the task cycle stage, students listened to audio recordings and completed communicative tasks. These tasks included identifying main ideas, completing information charts, solving problems based on the listening texts, and discussing answers with peers. Students worked collaboratively in small groups during task completion.

In the language focus stage, students analyzed important language features from the listening materials and reflected on the listening strategies used during the tasks. The teacher provided feedback and clarification to support students' understanding.

2.4 Data Analysis

The quantitative data obtained from the listening comprehension tests were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test in order to determine the overall improvement in students' listening performance. To examine whether the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores was statistically significant, a paired-sample t-test was conducted. The paired-sample t-test is commonly used to compare two sets of scores obtained from the same group of participants before and after an intervention (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

In addition, effect size (Cohen's d) was calculated to determine the magnitude of the instructional impact. According to Cohen (1988), an effect size value of 0.8 or higher indicates a large instructional effect. The qualitative data obtained from classroom observations and questionnaires were analyzed descriptively to support the interpretation of the quantitative findings.

3. RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the study regarding the effectiveness of Task-Based Learning (TBL) in improving students' listening comprehension. The results include descriptive statistics, tests of normality, inferential statistical analysis using a paired-sample t-test, and students' responses toward the implementation of task-based listening instruction.

3.1 Descriptive Statistics of Listening Scores

The results of this study indicate a significant improvement in students' listening comprehension after the implementation of Task-Based Learning. Descriptive statistics were first used to examine the overall change in students' listening performance between the pre-test and post-test.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of students' listening scores before and after the instructional intervention.

Test	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pre-test	14	57.14	—
Post-test	14	78.57	—

As shown in Table 1, the mean score of the pre-test was 57.14, indicating that students initially demonstrated a relatively low level of listening comprehension. After participating in eight sessions of task-based listening instruction, the mean score of the post-test increased to 78.57. This increase of more than 21 points suggests a considerable improvement in students' listening comprehension performance following the instructional intervention.

The comparison between the pre-test and post-test scores is illustrated in Figure 1.

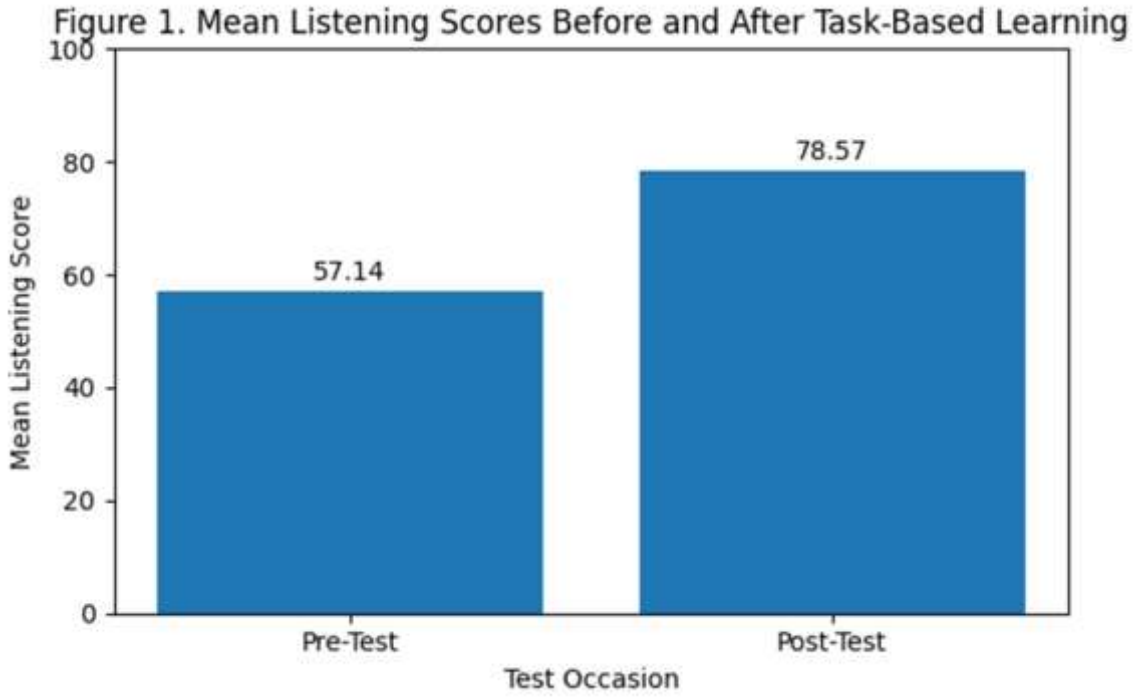


Figure 1. Comparison of Students' Listening Scores Before and After Task-Based Learning

Figure 1 presents the mean listening scores obtained before and after the implementation of Task-Based Learning. The figure shows a clear increase in students' listening performance after the instructional treatment. The bar chart visually demonstrates that the post-test mean score was substantially higher than the pre-test mean score. This pattern indicates that students were better able to comprehend spoken English after participating in the task-based listening activities.

The improvement observed in the post-test scores suggests that the task-based listening activities provided meaningful learning opportunities that helped students process spoken input more effectively. Through communicative tasks, students were required to listen actively for specific purposes, such as identifying key information, understanding the main ideas of spoken texts, and extracting relevant details. These tasks encouraged students to focus on the meaning of the listening materials rather than simply answering comprehension questions.

3.2 Test of normality

Before conducting inferential statistical analysis, a normality test was performed to determine whether the distribution of the listening scores met the assumptions required for parametric statistical testing. The Shapiro–Wilk test was used to assess the normality of the pre-test and post-test score distributions.

The results of the Shapiro–Wilk test indicated that both the pre-test ($p = 0.121$) and post-test ($p = 0.087$) scores did not significantly deviate from a normal distribution. Since both p-values were greater than the significance level of 0.05, the assumption of normality was satisfied. Therefore, the use of a parametric statistical test, specifically a paired-sample t-test, was considered appropriate for analyzing the difference between pre-test and post-test scores.

In addition to the statistical test, visual inspections of Q–Q plots were conducted to further examine the distribution of the data. Figures 2 and 3 present the Q–Q plots for the pre-test and post-test listening scores.

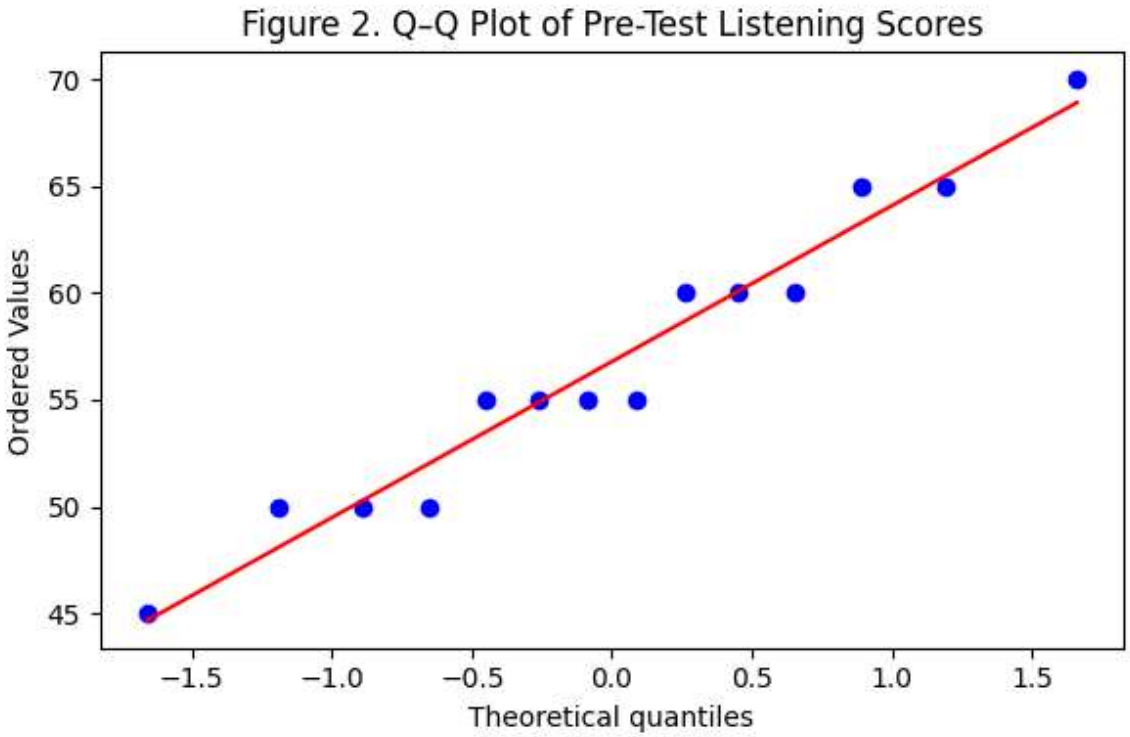
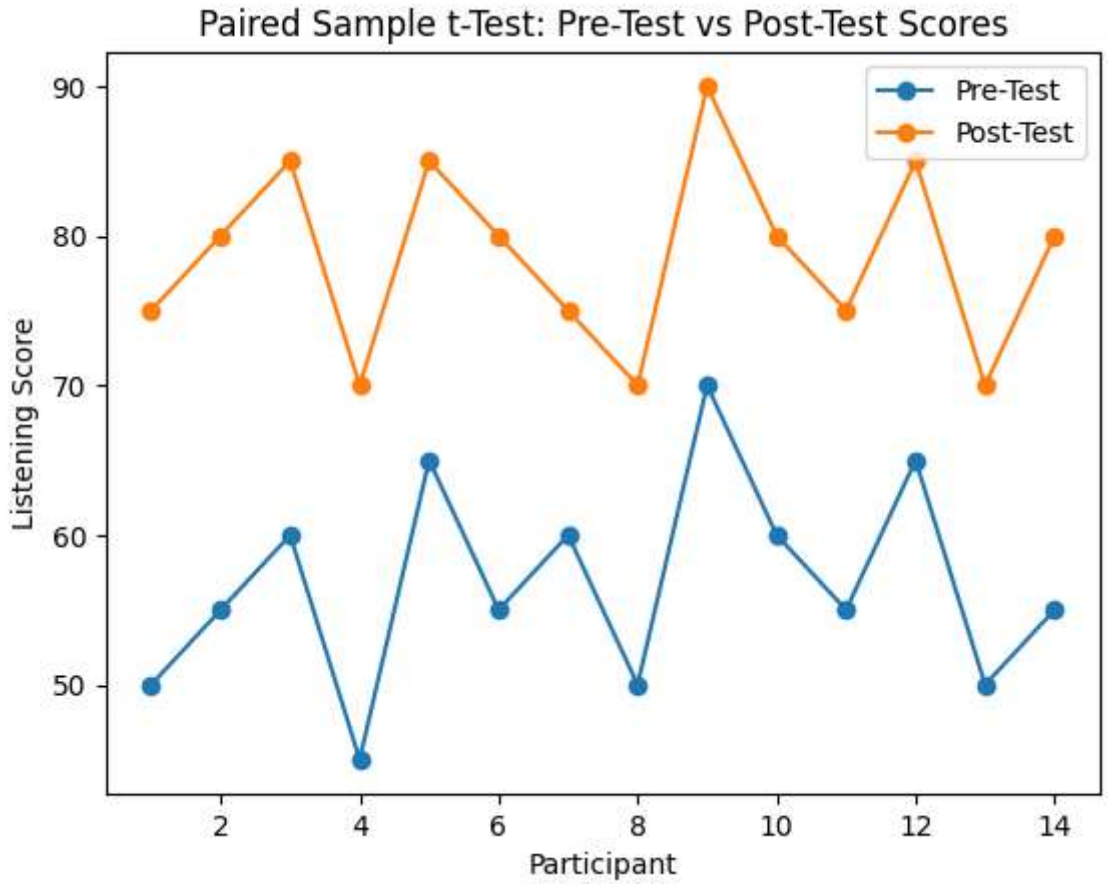


Figure 2 shows that the data points representing the pre-test scores closely follow the diagonal reference line, indicating that the distribution of the scores approximates a normal distribution. Only minor deviations are visible at the lower and upper ends of the distribution, which are typical in studies with relatively small sample sizes.



Similarly, Figure 3 presents the Q–Q plot of the post-test scores. The data points also align closely with the diagonal reference line, suggesting that the post-test scores follow a normal distribution. No extreme outliers or strong deviations from normality are observed.

Taken together, the statistical results and visual inspections of the Q–Q plots confirm that the assumption of normality was satisfied. This finding supports the use of a paired-sample t-test for comparing the pre-test and post-test scores.Shapiro–Wilk tests indicated that both pre-test ($p = 0.121$) and post-test ($p = 0.087$) distributions did not significantly deviate from normality; therefore, a parametric paired-sample t-test was appropriate.

3.3 Paired-Sample t-Test Results

To determine whether the improvement in students' listening scores was statistically significant, a paired-sample t-test was conducted. The paired-sample t-test compares two sets of scores obtained from the same group of participants before and after an instructional intervention.

The analysis revealed a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. The results of the paired-sample t-test showed that students' listening comprehension improved significantly after the implementation of task-based listening instruction, $t(13) = 10.82$, $p < .001$.

In addition to statistical significance, the effect size of the instructional intervention was calculated using Cohen's d to determine the magnitude of the improvement. The effect size was found to be very large (Cohen's $d = 3.05$), indicating that the task-based listening activities had a strong impact on students' listening comprehension performance.

Figure 4 provides a visual representation of the individual score changes for each participant.

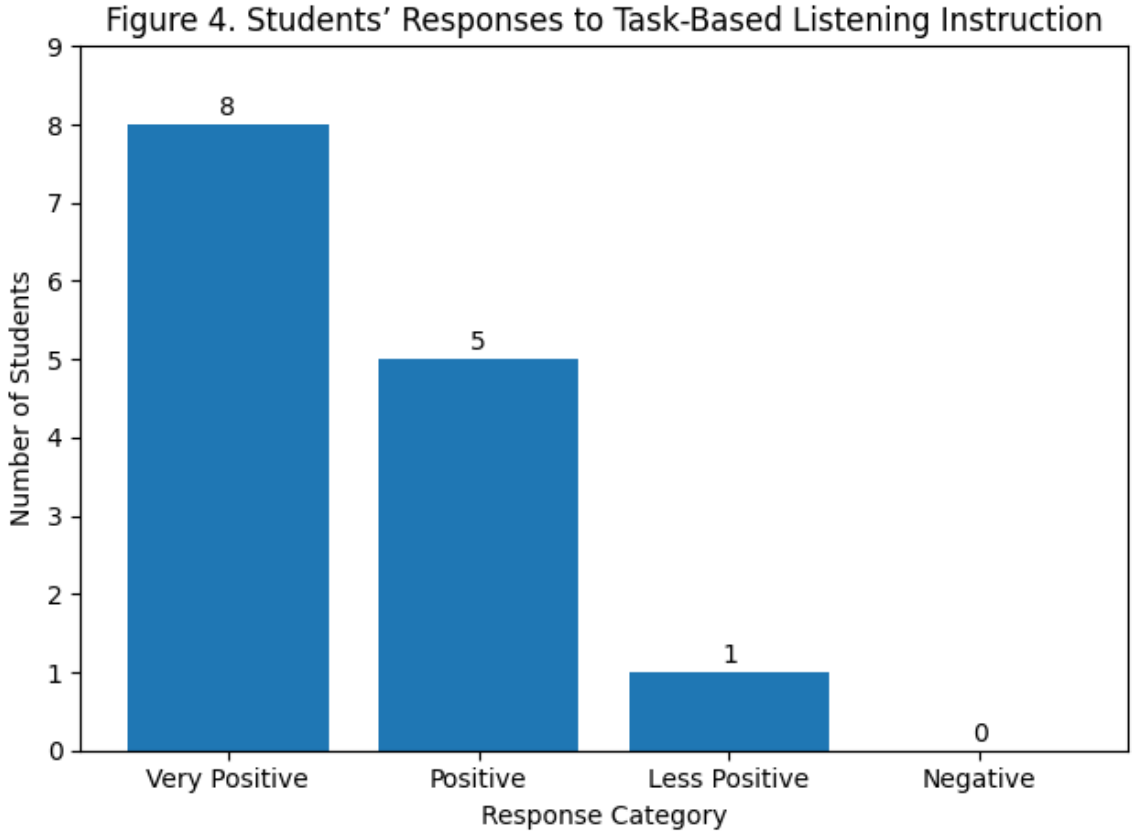


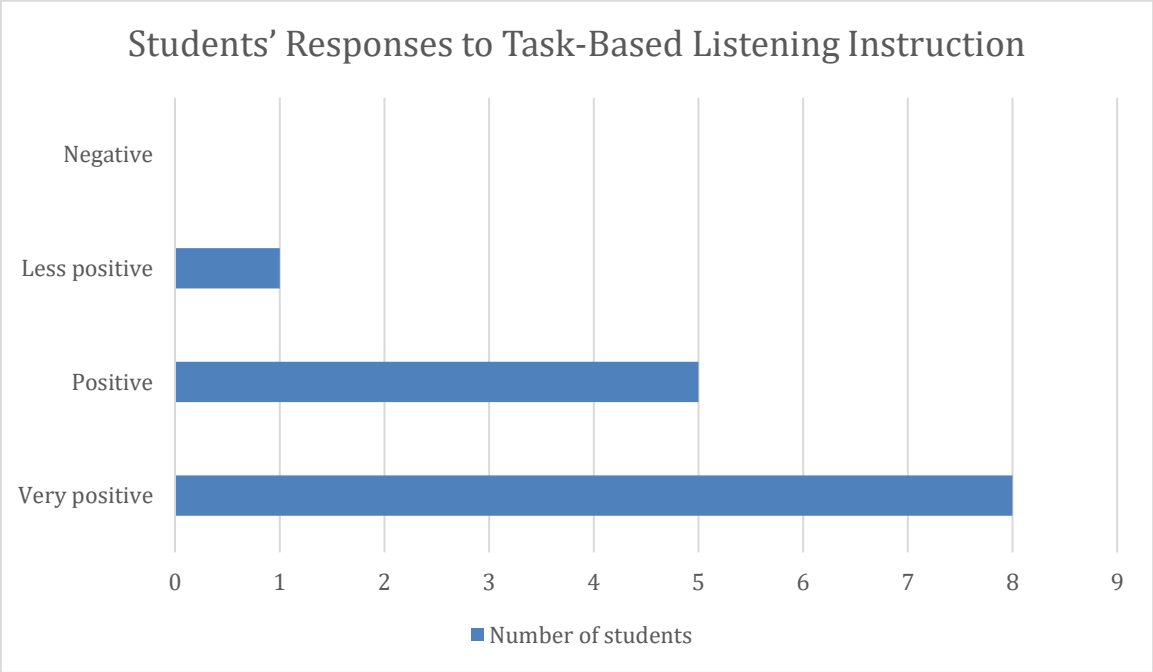
Figure 4 presents a paired comparison of students' listening scores before and after the instructional intervention. Each pair of points represents an individual student's pre-test and post-test scores. As illustrated in the figure, all students demonstrated higher scores on the post-test compared to the pre-test. The consistent upward pattern across all participants indicates that the improvement in listening performance was shared by the entire group rather than being limited to a few individuals.

The visual evidence shown in Figure 4 further supports the results of the paired-sample t-test, confirming that the implementation of Task-Based Learning contributed to meaningful improvements in students' listening comprehension.

3.4 Students' Responses to Task-Based Listening Instruction

In addition to the quantitative test results, students' perceptions of the task-based listening instruction were examined using a response questionnaire administered after the instructional intervention.

The questionnaire results revealed that students generally had positive perceptions of the task-based listening activities. As illustrated in Figure 5, the majority of students reported very positive responses toward the instructional approach.



Eight students indicated that the task-based listening activities were highly engaging and helpful for improving their listening comprehension. These students reported that the tasks allowed them to focus on specific listening objectives, such as identifying important information and understanding the main ideas of spoken texts.

Five students expressed positive responses, indicating that they found the listening activities enjoyable and beneficial for developing their listening skills. These students also reported that the tasks encouraged them to remain attentive during listening sessions and provided opportunities for meaningful practice.

Only one student indicated a less positive response, which may reflect individual differences in learning preferences or prior listening ability. Importantly, no students reported negative perceptions of the instructional approach.

Overall, the questionnaire results suggest that the implementation of Task-Based Listening instruction created an engaging and supportive learning environment. The predominance of positive responses indicates that the instructional approach not only improved students' listening comprehension but also increased their motivation and confidence in participating in listening activities.

4. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to answer two research questions: (1) whether Task-Based Learning significantly improves students' listening comprehension, and (2) how students respond to the implementation of task-based listening instruction.

4.1 Impact of Task-Based Learning on Students' Listening Comprehension

The first research question examined whether the implementation of Task-Based Learning significantly improved the listening comprehension of first-semester EFL students. The results clearly indicate that students' listening performance improved after the instructional intervention. The mean listening score increased substantially from the pre-test to the post-test, and the paired-sample t-test confirmed that the improvement was statistically significant. These findings suggest that the implementation of task-based listening instruction had a positive effect on students' listening comprehension.

This result supports previous studies indicating that communicative and task-based approaches can enhance learners' engagement with spoken input and promote more effective language learning processes (Ellis, 2021; Skehan, 2020). These findings are also consistent with previous studies demonstrating the effectiveness of task-based instruction in improving listening comprehension (Kositchaivat, 2025; Lam & Lien, 2025). Task-Based Learning encourages learners to process language input while completing meaningful communicative tasks, which may help them develop both linguistic knowledge and listening strategies.

One possible explanation for the improvement observed in this study lies in the role of the pre-task stage, which activates learners' prior knowledge and prepares them for the listening tasks. Activating background knowledge enables learners to anticipate the content of listening materials and organize incoming information more effectively. According to Vandergrift and Goh (2019), successful listening comprehension often depends on learners' ability to use contextual knowledge and prediction strategies to support top-down processing. In the present study, pre-task activities such as topic discussions and vocabulary preview may have helped students better interpret spoken input during the listening tasks.

Another factor contributing to improved listening comprehension is the task cycle stage, during which students were required to complete communicative tasks based on the listening materials. Unlike traditional listening instruction that focuses primarily on answering comprehension questions, task-based listening activities require learners to process spoken input while accomplishing meaningful goals. This process encourages deeper cognitive engagement with the listening material. Ellis (2021) argues that tasks promote language learning because learners must focus on meaning while simultaneously processing linguistic forms. As a result, students may develop both linguistic knowledge and listening strategies through task completion.

The collaborative nature of task-based learning may also have contributed to the improvement observed in this study. During task completion, students worked in small groups to discuss answers, clarify misunderstandings, and negotiate meaning. Interaction plays an important role in language acquisition because it allows learners to notice gaps in their understanding and refine their interpretations through communication with others. Long's (2015) interaction hypothesis suggests that negotiation of meaning during communication facilitates language acquisition by drawing learners' attention to problematic aspects of language input. Similarly, Philp and Duchesne (2021) emphasize that collaborative interaction increases learner engagement and promotes deeper processing of linguistic input.

In addition, the task-based listening activities implemented in this study appear to have supported the development of metacognitive listening strategies. During the listening tasks, students were encouraged to predict content, monitor their comprehension, and evaluate their understanding after completing the tasks. These processes correspond to key components of metacognitive strategy use, which has been identified as an important factor in successful listening comprehension (Goh & Aryadoust, 2021). Learners who actively regulate their listening processes are better able to manage cognitive demands and maintain attention during listening tasks. Therefore, the integration of communicative tasks with strategy use may explain the improvement in students' listening performance.

4.2 Students' Perceptions of Task-Based Listening Instruction

The second research question explored students' responses toward the implementation of task-based listening instruction. The questionnaire results indicated that students generally responded positively to the use of Task-Based Learning in listening activities. Most students reported that the task-based listening activities were engaging and helpful in improving their listening comprehension. The positive responses may be explained by the interactive and meaningful nature of the tasks used in the instructional sessions. Task-based listening activities encouraged students to actively participate in the learning process rather than passively answering comprehension questions. Through collaborative tasks such as identifying key information, completing information charts, and discussing answers with peers, students were able to engage more deeply with the listening materials.

The collaborative discussions during task completion may also have increased students' confidence in handling listening tasks. When students worked together to interpret the listening texts, they were able to share ideas and clarify misunderstandings, which may have reduced listening anxiety and improved their motivation to participate in listening activities.

4.3 Interpretation of Effect Size and Study Limitations

The large effect size observed in this study further indicates that the implementation of task-based listening instruction had a strong instructional impact. However, this result should be interpreted cautiously due to the relatively small sample size and the absence of a control group. Although the findings provide encouraging evidence regarding the potential benefits of task-based listening instruction, further research using larger samples and experimental designs is needed to confirm the magnitude of the effect.

4.4 Implications for Listening Instructions

Overall, the findings suggest that listening comprehension should be taught as an active and strategic process rather than merely as a receptive skill. Task-based listening instruction provides opportunities for learners to engage with spoken input, interact with peers, and apply listening strategies during meaningful communicative activities. Such learning environments may support the development of both listening competence and learner engagement in EFL classrooms.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examined the effectiveness of Task-Based Learning (TBL) in improving the listening comprehension of first-semester students in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. The findings indicate that the implementation of task-based listening instruction significantly improved students' listening performance. The quantitative results showed a notable increase in the mean listening score from 57.14 in the pre-test to 78.57 in the post-test, demonstrating that students achieved a higher level of listening comprehension after participating in the task-based learning activities. The statistical analysis further confirmed that this improvement was significant and accompanied by a very large effect size, suggesting that the instructional intervention had a substantial impact on students' listening achievement.

The improvement in listening comprehension may be attributed to several key features of task-based learning. Task-based listening activities encourage learners to actively engage with spoken input and participate in collaborative

interaction during the learning process. Through communicative tasks such as identifying key information, solving listening-based problems, and discussing answers with peers, students were required to process spoken language more meaningfully. These activities allowed learners to focus on understanding the overall message of the listening texts rather than simply responding to comprehension questions. Furthermore, the instructional procedure provided opportunities for students to apply metacognitive listening strategies, including predicting the content of listening texts, monitoring their understanding during listening, and evaluating their comprehension after completing the tasks. These processes may have supported the development of more effective listening strategies and contributed to the improvement in students' listening performance.

Despite these positive findings, several limitations of the study should be acknowledged. First, the study involved a relatively small sample size consisting of only fourteen students from a single class, which may limit the generalizability of the results to other EFL learning contexts. Second, the research employed a pre-experimental design without a control group, making it difficult to attribute the observed improvement solely to the task-based learning intervention. Other factors, such as students' increasing familiarity with the listening tasks or general language development over time, may also have influenced the results. In addition, the instructional intervention was conducted over a relatively short period of eight sessions, which may not fully capture the long-term impact of task-based listening instruction.

Nevertheless, the study contributes to the growing body of research on communicative language teaching by providing empirical evidence that task-based listening instruction can support the development of listening comprehension and promote learner engagement in EFL classrooms. The findings highlight the potential of integrating structured task-based listening activities into language instruction to encourage active participation and strategic listening behaviour. Future research is recommended to address the limitations of the present study by involving larger participant groups, longer instructional periods, and more rigorous experimental designs with control groups in order to further examine the effectiveness and broader applicability of task-based listening instruction.

REFERENCES

1. Al-Khresheh, M. (2024). Metacognitive listening strategies and EFL learners' listening comprehension. *Cogent Education*, 11(1).
2. Aryadoust, V. (2023). Second language listening constructs. *Language Assessment Quarterly*, 20(3), 1–21.
3. Badianti, A. (2023). Efektivitas pre-test dan post-test dalam pembelajaran listening di kalangan mahasiswa. *Jurnal Mahasiswa TARBAWI: Journal on Islamic Education*, 7(1), 110–120.
4. Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
5. Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
6. Cross, J. (2021). *Listening in the language classroom*. Cambridge University Press.
7. Ellis, R. (2021). *Task-based language teaching: Retrospect and prospect*. Cambridge University Press.
8. Field, J. (2018). *Listening in the language classroom*. Cambridge University Press.
9. Fu, Y., Zhang, X., & Xie, Q. (2023). Metacognitive strategies and listening comprehension. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, Article 1186023.
10. Goh, C. C. M., & Aryadoust, V. (2021). Metacognition in second language listening. *System*, 99, 102501.
11. Graham, S., Santos, D., & Vanderplank, R. (2018). Listening comprehension and strategy instruction. *Language Teaching Research*, 22(3), 345–365.
12. Kositchaivat, S. (2025). Task-based learning and listening comprehension in EFL classrooms. *LEARN Journal*, 18(1), 87–104.
13. Long, M. H. (2015). *Second language acquisition and task-based language teaching*. Wiley-Blackwell.
14. Mercer, S., & Dörnyei, Z. (2020). *Engaging language learners in contemporary classrooms*. Cambridge University Press.
15. Nation, I. S. P., & Newton, J. (2020). *Teaching ESL/EFL listening and speaking*. Routledge.
16. Philp, J., & Duchesne, S. (2021). Engagement in language learning. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 41, 50–72.
17. Skehan, P. (2020). *Second language task-based performance*. Routledge.
18. Susanti, S. (2024). The effect of task-based learning on EFL students' listening comprehension. *Journal of Language Teaching Research*, 15(2), 320–335.
19. Swain, M. (1995). Three functions of output in second language learning. In G. Cook & B. Seidlhofer (Eds.), *Principle and practice in applied linguistics* (pp. 125–144). Oxford University Press.
20. Vandergrift, L., & Goh, C. C. M. (2019). *Teaching and learning second language listening*. Routledge.
21. Willis, D., & Willis, J. (2021). *Doing task-based teaching*. Oxford University Press.

22. Zhang, D. (2025). Task-based teaching methods in English language education. *TESOL Quarterly*, 59(1), 210–225.