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Student's Listening Anxiety and Motivation in Autonomous Online Listening Activities

Fazia Nabila Husnaini & Leni Marlina
Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia
fazianabila26@gmail.com; lenimarlina@fbs.unp.ac.id

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Abstract

Online platforms provide learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) with access to stories and poems for independent listening practice. Evidence on how learners experience anxiety and motivation when using these materials remains limited. This study examined listening anxiety, motivation, and preferences for stories and poems across three platforms: British Council, Light Up Your Brain, and Children's Poetry Archive. The descriptive quantitative survey involved 32 purposively selected students in the English Department at Universitas Negeri Padang who had completed the Basic Listening course and used all three platforms. A validated four-point Likert-scale questionnaire assessed cognitive, affective, and behavioral anxiety, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, preferences for stories or poems, and experiences with the platforms. Responses were summarized using frequencies, percentages, and means. Mean scores indicated high cognitive anxiety (2.64) and affective anxiety (2.50) alongside high intrinsic motivation (2.93) and extrinsic motivation (3.04). The low mean for behavioral anxiety (2.26) suggested that students seldom avoided or abandoned listening tasks. Students preferred stories and found them easier to follow because of their clear plots. They valued poetry for its rhythm and expressive delivery and reported that replaying audio on the British Council platform helped ease anxiety. The findings suggest that educators can support autonomous listening by introducing stories before poetry and guiding students in the strategic use of playback controls.

Keywords: Listening Anxiety; Listening Motivation; Autonomous Listening; Digital Learning Platforms; Stories and Poetry

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INTRODUCTION

Listening comprehension is a key competence in learning English as a foreign language (EFL) because it is the main channel through which learners get linguistic input (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). It is also a challenging skill. Oral communication is transient in nature, requiring listeners to interpret sounds, vocabulary, and meaning on the spot with little control over pace and organization (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Fast speech and unfamiliar vocabulary or accents are often difficult, causing learners to feel anxious, frustrated, and less confident, especially when there is no teacher to help. Today, students have many opportunities to develop their listening skills outside the classroom with the help of digital platforms, but this also shifts the responsibility of overcoming difficulties to the students.

This emotional reaction is known as language anxiety, a context-dependent fear that encompasses the learners' self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors in situations of language learning (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989). Anxiety may interfere with concentration and the ability to take in new information (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994), and listening is especially subject to these disruptions. Elkhafaifi (2005) found that listening anxiety is related to, but distinct from, general foreign language anxiety, and is associated with lower listening performance. Research at Universitas Negeri Padang found that students in basic listening courses experienced listening anxiety related to their comprehension skills (Adnan et al., 2020a) and students in advanced courses also experienced similar anxiety (Adnan et al., 2020b). This implies that anxiety is a common phenomenon regardless of learners' proficiency levels and that it does not decrease as learners move forward. Furthermore, learner autonomy—the ability to control one's own learning process, including setting goals, choosing content, and evaluating outcomes (Holec, 1981; Little, 1991)—is closely tied to self-regulated learning (Zimmerman, 2002). Digital videos, podcasts, and websites offer authentic resources and flexible learning environments (Benson, 2013) that foster metacognitive skills (Bouhafa & Hochberg, 2022) and learner motivation (Pratiwi & Waluyo, 2023). However, Luu and Lu (2024) found that university students still required instructor support to maximize autonomous online listening, while Teng (2022) noted that platform controls like replay and pace selection can reduce anxiety. Alongside anxiety, both intrinsic motivation (doing an activity for inherent pleasure and self-determination) and extrinsic motivation (doing an activity for external rewards such as grades) affect the effort and persistence learners invest in self-directed learning (Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Ryan & Deci, 2000a, 2000b), although evidence at Universitas Negeri Padang showed

that listening anxiety correlated with self-efficacy but not consistently with motivation (Adnan et al., 2021; Marlina et al., 2021).

Previous studies have investigated autonomy, motivation, and anxiety associated with digital English education. The use of electronic devices and online materials has increased learner autonomy, motivation, and metacognitive awareness (Pratiwi & Waluyo, 2023; Bouhafa & Hochberg, 2022; Anis & Khan, 2023), while supportive online learning climates and digital platforms further empower independent EFL practice (Nurhasanah et al., 2023; Sari & Rahmawati, 2025). In the context of listening, autonomous practice and authentic or digital storytelling materials have been shown to enhance listening comprehension and intrinsic motivation (Kurniawan & Putri, 2024; Hidayah et al., 2024; Prasetyo & Wijaya, 2024; Rahmadani & Fitria, 2025), whereas mobile and computer-assisted self-regulated listening environments can mitigate listening anxiety (Azar & Nasiri, 2014; Chen et al., 2021). Luu and Lu (2024) noted the importance of teacher support in autonomous listening, Teng (2022) highlighted the relationships between anxiety, self-efficacy, and motivation, and Manoochehrzadeh et al. (2024) demonstrated a link between reflective thinking, cultural intelligence, and reduced listening anxiety. In the Indonesian context, listening anxiety has been associated with comprehension and self-efficacy (Adnan et al., 2020a, 2020b; Marlina et al., 2021). Despite these efforts, four major gaps remain: first, autonomy, motivation, and anxiety have been studied largely as separate entities rather than integrated into a single framework; second, online listening studies have focused primarily on formal online courses rather than self-directed out-of-class practice; third, literary auditory resources—specifically comparing narrative stories and rhythmic verses (Collie & Slater, 1987; Lazar, 1993; Marlina, 2012)—have seldom been examined in terms of learners' emotional responses; and fourth, findings on the relationship between motivation and anxiety remain mixed in Indonesian EFL contexts. A preliminary study conducted on April 21, 2026, with 18 students of the English Department at Universitas Negeri Padang confirmed that although all students (100%) liked independent listening practice and 94.4% were interested in materials from the British Council, 55.6% still felt anxious listening to English audio and 94.4% worried they would not understand everything they heard, with platform-specific anxiety ranging from 38.9% (Children's Poetry Archive) to 50.0% (Light Up Your Brain).

To bridge these gaps, this study offers an integrated multidimensional framework examining listening anxiety across three distinct dimensions—cognitive (negative thoughts, low confidence, and difficulty concentrating), affective (nervousness, tension, and fear), and

behavioral (task avoidance, distraction, or giving up)—alongside intrinsic and extrinsic motivation within digital literary environments. Literature provides authentic language and encourages personal involvement (Collie & Slater, 1987; Lazar, 1993), where narrative prose has a standard structure that facilitates content processing (Marlina, 2012), whereas poetry uses figurative language, rhythm, and sound patterns that demand greater attention yet remain evocative. By incorporating three complementary platforms—British Council (structured listening tasks and exercises), Light Up Your Brain (short audio stories, poems, and songs), and Children's Poetry Archive (poems recited by poets and diverse English speakers)—this study captures how varying levels of organization and literary expression shape learners' emotional and motivational states.

This research aims to provide insight into students' listening apprehension and motivation in self-directed listening tasks using narratives and verses from the British Council, Light Up Your Brain, and Children's Poetry Archive. Specifically, the study seeks to: (a) assess the levels of students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral listening anxiety; (b) assess the levels of their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation; (c) identify their preferences for narratives and poetry; and (d) elucidate their experiences with the three platforms as independent listening tools. The results are expected to assist in the selection and development of listening materials and the support that teachers and platforms might offer for students in their independent listening practice.

METHODS

The present study used a descriptive quantitative approach to explain students' listening anxiety and motivation in self-directed listening tasks by using numerical data. This approach was selected because it enables objective measurement of anxiety and motivation levels through structured questionnaire items expressed in frequencies, percentages, and averages.

A descriptive survey design was employed in this study to map students' current emotional and motivational states during out-of-class autonomous listening practice. Rather than testing hypotheses or establishing causal relations, this design systematically documents patterns of apprehension, motivation, and material preferences across digital platforms.

The participants were the 2025 cohort of undergraduate students in the English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang who had completed the Basic Listening course

and had used British Council, Light Up Your Brain, and Children's Poetry Archive for independent listening in the previous semester. Purposive sampling based on these criteria was used to recruit participants. Out of three listening classes in the cohort, one class (n = 19) served as a pilot group for instrument validation, while the other two classes constituted the primary sample of 32 students.

Data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire containing 31 items written in English with Indonesian translations, rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). The survey was organized into seven domains: cognitive listening anxiety (4 items), affective listening anxiety (4 items), behavioral listening anxiety (4 items), intrinsic motivation (5 items), extrinsic motivation (4 items), preferences for stories versus poems (5 items), and experiences with the three platforms (5 items). To ensure psychometric rigor (Ahmed & Ishtiaq, 2021), content validity was evaluated by specialist validators from the Department of English Education and the Faculty of Psychology at Universitas Negeri Padang on clarity, relevance, and suitability. Following a pilot study with 19 non-sample students, item validity was tested using Pearson product-moment correlation in SPSS, confirming that all items were valid at the 0.05 significance level. Internal consistency reliability was examined using Cronbach's alpha, yielding coefficients ranging from 0.61 to 0.92 across dimensions, which falls within the acceptable range for exploratory research (Taber, 2018). The data collection process took place over two to three weeks during the semester: first, the researcher introduced the three platforms and explained how to use them; second, students engaged in autonomous listening independently for two to three weeks according to their own schedules and preferences; and third, students completed the questionnaire via a digital device on a voluntary and confidential basis.

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics—specifically frequencies, percentages, and mean scores—for each item and dimension. The interpretation of dimension mean scores followed the procedure of Upara and Chusanachoti (2023), where mean scores of 2.50 and above were categorized as high (*agree*) and mean scores below 2.50 were categorized as low (*disagree*).

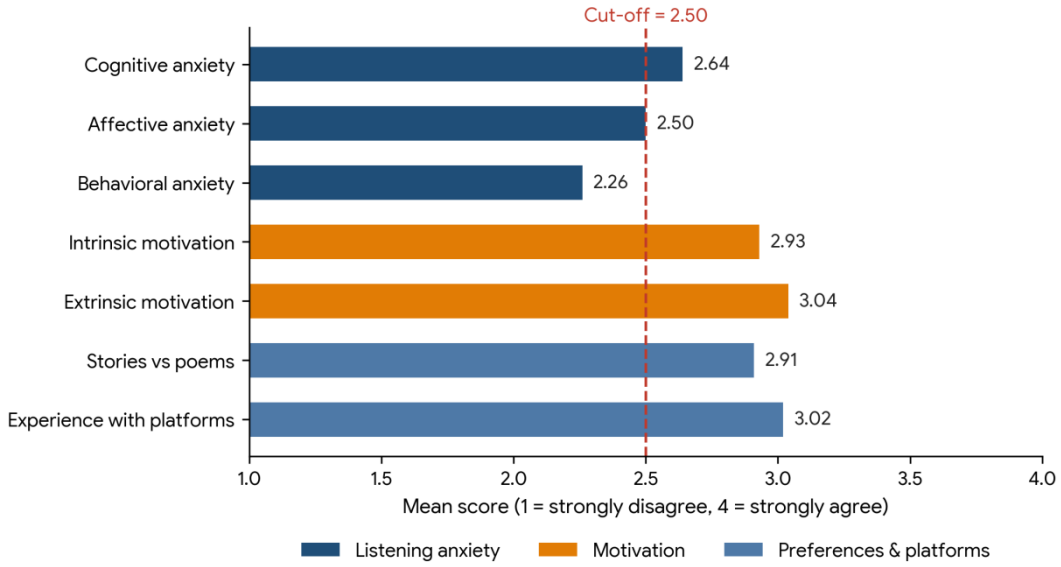
RESULTS

This section presents the descriptive responses of 32 students across the 31 questionnaire items. Table 1 summarizes the mean score and category of each dimension,

while Figure 1 illustrates these dimension scores visually. Following the cut-off criteria described in the Method section, mean scores of 2.50 or above are categorized as high (*agree*) and mean scores below 2.50 are categorized as low (*disagree*).

Table 1. Mean scores for each dimension (N = 32; 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree)

No.	Dimension	Items	Mean	Category
1	Cognitive dimension of listening anxiety	4	2.64	High (agree)
2	Affective dimension of listening anxiety	4	2.50	High (agree)
3	Behavioral dimension of listening anxiety	4	2.26	Low (disagree)
4	Intrinsic motivation	5	2.93	High (agree)
5	Extrinsic motivation	4	3.04	High (agree)
6	Stories vs poems	5	2.91	High (agree)
7	Experience with the three platforms	5	3.02	High (agree)



Picture 1. Mean scores for each dimension (*N* = 32; dashed line = cut-off of 2.50)

1. Cognitive Dimension of Listening Anxiety

Table 2. Mean score of cognitive anxiety

Dimension	Mean Score	Category
Cognitive dimension of listening anxiety	2.64	High (agree)

As shown in Table 2, the cognitive dimension had the highest mean among the three anxiety dimensions (*M* = 2.64). The strongest item concerned social comparison: 81.3% of the students agreed that other students understood listening materials better than they did (*M* = 2.94). Many students also lost focus when they did not understand words in a poem (71.9%, *M* = 2.75). The lowest cognitive item, feeling unsure about one's listening ability on online platforms (*M* = 2.31), was still endorsed by half of the students (50.0%).

2. Affective Dimension of Listening Anxiety

Table 3. Mean score of affective anxiety

Dimension	Mean Score	Category
Affective dimension of listening anxiety	2.50	High (agree)

As presented in Table 3, the affective dimension was right at the cut-off for the high category (M = 2.50). Students were most worried about making mistakes when answering comprehension questions after a story (71.9%, M = 2.72). Slightly more than half felt nervous when understanding poems without a lecturer's help (53.1%, M = 2.59), and half felt anxious because the language of Children's Poetry Archive is poetic (50.0%, M = 2.47). Physical tension, such as a faster heartbeat, was the least common reaction (40.6%, M = 2.22).

3. Behavioral Dimension of Listening Anxiety

Table 4. Mean score of behavioral anxiety

Dimension	Mean Score	Category
Behavioral dimension of listening anxiety	2.26	Low (disagree)

Table 4 indicates that the behavioral dimension was the only low anxiety domain (M = 2.26). Giving up immediately when the content was not understood had the lowest mean of the entire questionnaire (M = 1.97), with only 25.0% agreeing and 75.0% disagreeing. Regarding anomalous or negative behavioral patterns within this generally low dimension, half of the students admitted checking their phones or doing other things while listening (50.0%, M = 2.44), while 43.8% avoided poems for fear of not understanding them (M = 2.28) and 40.6% reported stopping listening when the material became too difficult.

4. Intrinsic Motivation

Table 5. Mean score of intrinsic motivation

Dimension	Mean Score	Category
Intrinsic motivation	2.93	High (agree)

As shown in Table 5, intrinsic motivation was high (M = 2.93). Most students liked trying different online platforms to improve their listening (87.5%, M = 3.06), felt satisfied when they understood a poem without looking at the text (81.3%, M = 3.06), and found the rhythm and expression of English poems interesting (84.4%, M = 2.91). Enjoyment of the stories on Light Up Your Brain was also high (78.1%, M = 2.91). The lowest intrinsic item was continuing to practice without lecturer assignments (M = 2.72), yet 71.9% of the students agreed with it.

5. Extrinsic Motivation

Table 6. Mean score of extrinsic motivation

Dimension	Mean Score	Category
Extrinsic motivation	3.04	High (agree)

Table 6 shows that extrinsic motivation was high and recorded the highest dimension mean (M = 3.04). Wanting a good grade in the listening course (87.5%, M = 3.13), not falling behind classmates (87.5%, M = 3.09), and using platforms recommended by the lecturer (87.5%, M = 3.03) were each endorsed by the same high proportion of students. Parents' expectations were the weakest extrinsic driver but were still agreed upon by 78.1% (M = 2.91).

6. Preferences Between Stories and Poems

Table 7. Mean score of stories vs poems

Dimension	Mean Score	Category
Stories vs poems	2.91	High (agree)

As presented in Table 7, students leaned clearly toward stories (M = 2.91). The highest-rated item was being more motivated to listen to stories because of their clear plot (93.8%, M = 3.16). Most students also found stories easier to understand than poems (81.3%) and would recommend stories for autonomous practice while treating poems as a challenge (87.5%). At the same time, 65.6% said poems made them more anxious because of their unusual language (M = 2.69), yet 75.0% remained interested in poems because of the reader's engaging voice (M = 2.81).

7. Experiences with the Three Platforms

Table 8. Mean score of experience with the platforms

Dimension	Mean Score	Category
Experience with the three platforms	3.02	High (agree)

As displayed in Table 8, experiences with the platforms were positive (M = 3.02). The replay feature of British Council received the highest mean (M = 3.16), with 81.3% agreeing that it reduces anxiety and 43.8% strongly agreeing. Students also felt that the three platforms support autonomous learning because they can be accessed at any time (90.6%, M = 3.13), felt more comfortable with the short materials of Light Up Your Brain (90.6%, M = 3.00), and found Children's Poetry Archive artistic and interesting even though its language is sometimes difficult (93.8%, M = 2.97). The clear and calm narrator voice of Light Up Your

Brain was the weakest item, although 71.9% still agreed with it (*M* = 2.84). Table 9 summarizes the standout questionnaire items with the highest and lowest agreement levels.

Table 9. Selected items with the highest and lowest agreement (agree = "agree" plus "strongly agree"; N = 32)

No.	Item	Dimension	Agree (%)	Mean
24	More motivated to listen to stories because the plot is clear	Stories vs poems	93.8	3.16
27	Replay on British Council reduces anxiety	Experience with platforms	81.3	3.16
18	Practice to get a good grade	Extrinsic motivation	87.5	3.13
4	Others understand listening better than me	Cognitive anxiety	81.3	2.94
23	Poems make me more anxious because the language is unusual	Stories vs poems	65.6	2.69
11	Give up immediately when I do not understand	Behavioral anxiety	25.0	1.97

DISCUSSION

The findings reveal a notable divergence between internal emotional states and outward learning behaviors: students' anxiety manifested primarily in what they thought and felt rather than in what they did. Cognitive (*M* = 2.64) and affective anxiety (*M* = 2.50) reached or exceeded the high threshold, whereas behavioral anxiety remained low (*M* = 2.26). Cognitive apprehension was driven largely by social comparison with classmates (81.3%), indicating that negative self-evaluation persists even when students practice privately outside the classroom. Nevertheless, only 25.0% of students gave up immediately when facing comprehension barriers, meaning the majority persisted in listening despite their anxiety. Simultaneously, both intrinsic (*M* = 2.93) and extrinsic motivation (*M* = 3.04) were high, showing that academic goals, lecturer recommendations, and intrinsic enjoyment jointly sustained learner persistence when no instructor was present. Examining the three anxiety dimensions separately proved essential, as a single composite score would have obscured the gap between students' internal worry and their behavioral resilience.

These results align with Horwitz et al.'s (1986) view of language anxiety as a situation-specific affective response and corroborate earlier studies at Universitas Negeri Padang demonstrating that listening anxiety persists across proficiency levels (Adnan et al., 2020a, 2020b). The low behavioral avoidance supports Benson (2013), Teng (2022), and Azar and Nasiri (2014), who argued that learner control features in digital and mobile environments—

such as replaying audio, adjusting pace, and selecting materials—help learners manage difficulty and reduce anxiety, as reflected in the high endorsement of British Council's replay feature (81.3%). Furthermore, the parallel operation of intrinsic and extrinsic drives supports Ryan and Deci's (2000a, 2000b) self-determination framework, showing that both motivation types function together rather than in opposition, while contextualizing mixed correlation findings in prior local research (Adnan et al., 2021) and recent findings on independent listening motivation (Kurniawan & Putri, 2024). Regarding literary and authentic content, students' preference for stories confirms Marlina's (2012) and Prasetyo and Wijaya's (2024) observations that structured narrative and digital storytelling formats facilitate auditory comprehension, whereas sustained interest in expressive poetry readings supports Collie and Slater's (1987) and Hidayah et al.'s (2024) arguments on the motivational value of authentic literary and auditory texts. Moreover, the strong influence of lecturer recommendations (87.5%) echoes Luu and Lu (2024) and Nurhasanah et al. (2023), who found that autonomous online learners still value structured teacher guidance and supportive learning climates.

Theoretically, this study enriches EFL self-regulated learning literature by demonstrating that multidimensional anxiety measurement captures behavioral persistence that unidimensional anxiety scales overlook, and by confirming that anxiety and high motivation coexist during autonomous digital practice. Practically, EFL instructors should scaffold out-of-class listening assignments by starting with structured narrative stories before gradually introducing rhythmically complex poetry, explicitly guiding students on how to utilize playback controls (such as replay features) to manage difficulty, and helping learners overcome peer-comparison anxieties. For educational platform designers, providing short, well-structured audio segments alongside accessible playback controls and expressive narration can maximize learner comfort and engagement without cognitive overload.

Several limitations should be kept in mind when interpreting these findings. First, the sample size was relatively small (N = 32) and came from a single academic department, which restricts the generalizability of the results to broader EFL populations. Second, the data relied entirely on self-report questionnaires, which may be subject to response bias. Third, because questionnaire items evaluating platform experiences combined the three platforms rather than isolating each platform statistically, and because the descriptive design did not test inferential correlations, precise causal links between individual platform features, anxiety, and motivation could not be established.

CONCLUSION

The present study examined EFL students' listening anxiety and motivation in self-directed online listening tasks using narratives and verses from the British Council, Light Up Your Brain, and Children's Poetry Archive. Based on survey responses from 32 English Department students, four key conclusions can be drawn: (1) listening anxiety was more pronounced in students' thoughts and feelings—with high cognitive (M = 2.64) and affective anxiety (M = 2.50) driven by peer comparison and fear of errors—than in their actions, as behavioral anxiety was low (M = 2.26) and few students abandoned tasks; (2) both intrinsic (M = 2.93) and extrinsic motivation (M = 3.04) were high, working in tandem to sustain independent listening; (3) students preferred narratives (M = 2.91) for their coherent plot and ease of comprehension, while poetry remained engaging through rhythm and expressive recitation; and (4) learners rated the three platforms positively (M = 3.02), particularly valuing British Council's replay function, Light Up Your Brain's concise stories, and Children's Poetry Archive's artistic readings.

Collectively, this study contributes to language learning scholarship in three ways: (1) conceptually, it demonstrates that high motivation and listening anxiety can coexist during autonomous listening without causing task avoidance; (2) methodologically, it underscores the importance of disaggregating cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions when evaluating listening apprehension; and (3) pedagogically, it provides an empirical foundation for sequencing literary listening materials—from structured narratives to poetry—supported by digital playback controls.

Future research is recommended to: (1) involve larger and more diverse samples across multiple institutions and proficiency levels to improve generalizability; (2) employ correlational, experimental, or mixed-methods approaches (such as interviews or listening logs) to investigate causal relationships among anxiety dimensions, motivation, and autonomy; and (3) analyze individual digital platforms separately to determine how specific interface and content features influence learners' emotional regulation.

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