Autonomy-Based Listening: Vietnamese University Students' Perceptions of Self-Access Web-Based Listening Practices

Vy Luu Thi Mai, Ho Chi Minh City University of Economics and Finance, Vietnam

Corresponding email address: vyltm@uef.edu.vn

To cite this article

Scroll down for article.

Autonomy-Based Listening: Vietnamese University Students' Perceptions of Self-Access Web-Based Listening Practices

Vy Luu Thi Mai, Ho Chi Minh City University of Economics and Finance, Vietnam

Abstract

Self-access language learning (SALL) can promote autonomy among language learners. It is a practical means for creating comfortable, personalized environments in which learners can take a more active part in making decisions and choices in their language learning trajectories. In the domain of second language (L2) listening, self-access work can fulfill the individual needs of learners whose listening processes are supposed to be respected. However, in countries where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL), this is not always the case due to traditional teacher-led large-sized listening classrooms and test-oriented curricula. Therefore, the present study was designed to investigate Vietnamese students' perceptions of a self-access listening platform (SALP) which was built to facilitate L2 beginners to get familiar with the fast delivery of speech and to involve their personal interpretations of the input into the comprehension process. The study also aimed to examine whether this self-access approach can cultivate autonomous listening. Qualitative data were gathered through interviews with 15 non-English major university students whose disciplines were business management, marketing, communication, and public relations. They completed a six-week listening course on this online listening platform. The major findings indicate that students had positive listening experiences with the SALP regarding time flexibility and practicality. Despite students' full awareness of the potential benefits of the SALP, a few of them still showed resistance to the self-access listening approach as a substitution for traditional classroom-based listening. The results reported here shed new light on the possibilities of implementing autonomy-based listening in a virtual self-access environment in L2 listening pedagogy.

Keywords: learners' perceptions, self-access language learning, self-access listening, Vietnamese EFL learners, learner autonomy

Autonomy in language learning, the ability to rely more on internal capabilities than on external factors to master a language (Littlewood, 1999), has been recognized as a fundamental characteristic of a lifelong learner in the 21st century. Simultaneously, the exponential growth of technology has expanded the opportunities for students to become autonomous language learners. Achieving language skills is not restricted within the constraint of brick-and-mortar learning anymore. Thanks to the originality of self-access language learning (SALL), learning

without recourse to teacher-led classes has become attainable (Benson & Voller, 1997). In fact, the idea of augmenting the traditional classroom with SALL for cultivating learner autonomy has been acknowledged by several researchers (e.g., Chung, 2013; Diaz, 2016; Gardner & Miller, 2011; Gardner & Yung, 2017; Morrison, 2008). To these authors, SALL has the potential for giving learners the freedom to have active engagement, critical reflection, and a certain level of personalization, thus resulting in a positive learning experience.

Meanwhile, according to Takano and Noda (1999), L2 listening is notoriously hard, especially in the early stages of acquisition. Listeners must deal with speech containing assimilation, prosodic patterns, disguising unstressed words, and varying speed (Rost, 2016). To resolve the spontaneous and instantaneous ingression of information for achieving comprehension, listeners need a greater processing load. In addition, this comprehension process is very complex, as noted by Dunkel (1991), under the influence of various kinds of variables, including cultural backgrounds, linguistic knowledge, learner traits, interactive contexts, and so on. Despite these characteristics of listening, the common picture of listening pedagogy is often painted with a pattern of 'listen, answer, check' in the traditional classroom (Nguyen & Abbott, 2017). The teachers are often in control of the listening texts while the students passively try to catch up with the speech stream, which may not always be a success. This manipulation of the listening process is also noted by Field (2009), who stresses the need for seeking a more appropriate approach to teaching listening.

In this sense, autonomous or self-access listening practice has proven itself to be a panacea for alleviating this problem for L2 listeners. Self-access listening can provide students with flexibility and control for their own listening process, especially more or less personalizing their listening comprehension (Zhao, 2006). Most importantly, self-access work is practically a catalyst for promoting learner autonomy in the domain of listening (Diaz, 2016). However, little attention has been paid to exploring learners' perceptions of self-access listening. A review of the literature has shown that most studies about SALL focus on language learning in general (e.g., Chung, 2013; Diaz, 2016; Gardner & Miller, 2011; Gardner & Yung, 2017; Morrison, 2008). Regarding self-access listening, prior studies attempted to increase students' exposure to listening outside the classrooms with the aid of a technological tool, such as podcasts (Bozorgian & Shamsi, 2022), Google Classrooms (Melani, 2020), TED Talks (Yang, 2021), mobile devices (Fatimah et al., 2021), etc. Others underscore metacognitive awareness for fostering autonomous

listening, including listening logs (Kemp, 2009), self-assessment, and reflection (Ngo, 2020). In particular, in a study by Vu et al. (2022), an experimental design demonstrated the possibility of enhancing L2 listening abilities in a technology-based autonomous listening environment. Therefore, more research needs to be done to obtain a better understanding of learners' perceptions when they are involved in self-access listening. These insights hopefully could be valuable for laying a foundation for promoting learner autonomy in developing listening skills as well as implementing self-access listening in the listening pedagogy, particularly in Vietnam. In light of the above, this article aims to explore how Vietnamese students at a private university perceived a self-access listening approach after they practiced listening on a virtual platform. At the same time, it seeks to examine whether this self-access approach can help these students promote autonomous listening.

Literature Review

Autonomy and Self-Access Language Learning (SALL)

Self-access language learning (SALL) is an integral part of learner autonomy development (Raya & Vieira, 2021). This relationship was demonstrated long ago by Sheerin (1997), who ascribed the emergence of self-access to two underlying reasons. First, it can help learners meet their individual needs in the context in which the problem of diversity prevails, especially within large-sized classrooms. Second, it serves as a promising tool to produce an ideological change in the student's mindset about independence. Within the space created by SALL, learners discover how to take responsibility for their learning and gradually develop their own learning strategies for achieving success. In this sense, SALL can function as a catalyst to cultivate autonomy. Students learn to shift from a state of reliance on external support toward a capacity to act independently when given the opportunities to establish autonomous learning habits.

Benson (1997) defined the concept of autonomy in three aspects: technical, psychological, and political. The technical aspect refers to the act of learning a language without following any framework of any educational institution and without the presence of a teacher, while the psychological aspect describes a capacity that enables learners to take responsibility for their own learning. In the political sense, it considers the state of having control over the processes as well as the contents of learning. Needless to say, SALL can fulfill these

requirements with its features thanks to the advancement of the Internet. Meanwhile, in East Asian countries, autonomy is categorized into two facets by Littlewood (1999): proactive and reactive. The former refers to learners' ability to take full responsibility for their learning, choose the appropriate learning methods, and determine and self-evaluate their goal-achievements, provided that they are provided with guidance and orientation. The latter, which is related to learners' ability to organize their learning resources to obtain academic success, is called reactive autonomy. What characterizes this notion of autonomy is shaped by the educational contexts, which are deep-rooted and influenced by the values and perceptions of the community where teachers' power is dominant. Therefore, autonomous listening is supposed to develop on the premise that students are given scaffolding or orientations. This seemingly resonates with the characteristics of online SALL, which stresses the importance of instructional design in supporting learners to be self-directed. In another strand, autonomy is positioned in the intersection of space and place (Lamb & Murray, 2018), which focuses on learning activities beyond the classroom. This idea shares some common ground with the concepts of autonomy as a motivational state, as described by Mynard and Shelton-Strong (2022). It provides energy and directions for learners to manage and act on learning resources in particular environments. To make this state happen, students need to be provided with support related to autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Similar points were made long ago by Dickinson and Carver (1980) as the essential knowledge with which learners should be equipped to become autonomous in their language learning journey. First, learners need to know how to learn a language and work independently with confidence, regardless of the teachers' presence. Second, learners need to change their attitudes towards learning a language in a way that their efforts and strategies matter in achieving success. Lastly, they need to habituate to self-directed learning by practicing.

Several self-access centers have been established to help language learners achieve language gains in a variety of ways, such as improving linguistic knowledge (Chung, 2013), building self-directed learning skills (Victori, 2007), acquiring effective learning strategies (Law, 2011; Morrison, 2008) in addition to providing resources for advising (Mynard, 2019), etc. In these studies, learners were reported to have positive perceptions of SALL in terms of its usefulness (Reinders & Cotterall, 2001) and to show readiness to be responsible for their learning in a self-access manner (Razieyeh, 2012). The potential of SALL to offer learners a

positive L2 learning experience is also confirmed by a group of students in Gardner and Yung's (2017) research. Notably, thanks to SALL, learners can develop some sense of responsibility, awareness, and reflectivity (Diaz, 2016).

In the meantime, the advancement of technology has blurred the boundaries of self-access environments, which makes SALL not necessarily restricted to a physical location but can be a virtual space. As a result, SALL enables learners to take even more control of their learning at their disposal (Alzahrani & Wright, 2016). This benefit brings up the need to develop listening via SALL since the process of listening is considered a cognitive, sophisticated, individualized process (Field, 2004). During this process, as argued by Field (2004), the fact that listeners may adopt bottom-up or top-down techniques for comprehension is variable depending on their preferences, their linguistic knowledge, and the type of assigned tasks, to name but a few. However, classroom-based listening is mainly controlled by the teachers, and actual time on tasks is often insufficient for listening development. Therefore, self-access listening can give learners the freedom and choice in deciding where, when, and what to listen. Listening practice becomes more personalized and comfortable for learners. This not only reflects the nature of the listening process but also guarantees an adequate amount of time on tasks for students.

Self-Access Listening

Self-access listening is a form of listening that occurs on a web-based platform embedded in Learning Management Systems where learners can get access to a collection of available listening activities in their own time, at their own pace, and in the way that they feel most comfortable (Zhao, 2006). These listening activities were designed by instructors based on some principles serving the listeners' needs. For maximizing the effectiveness as well as the efficiency of self-access listening, as suggested by Sheerin (1997), some factors should be taken into account. First, learners need to be equipped with appropriate knowledge via training and continuing support during practice. Second, listening materials should be designed in a way that learners' meaning-making mechanism is respected. In this regard, each learner is given the chance to interpret the listening input in their own way rather than completing predetermined answers. This is to say, instead of showing correct answers, the system allows learners to self-evaluate their responses. Finally, the procedures should be straightforward. Problems regarding access and retrieval should be minimized. With a focus on instructional design for listening, Vu

et al. (2021) also emphasized the significance of respecting listeners' meaning construction, providing precise feedback and authentic input, developing both top-down and bottom-up processing, and personalizing their listening environment. The goals of implementing self-access listening within the context of this study are also based on the premise of these principles but to a different degree. Moreover, this approach can give rise to a transformation in the roles of both teachers and learners (Sturtridge, 1997). The teachers' power and workload are likely to be lessened because they do not have to play the recordings and give any explanations in the listening class anymore. The primary role of a teacher would be a facilitator giving the necessary support and positive encouragement. In the same manner, learners must develop a sense of responsibility for their listening and rely less on the teachers. They would be willing and motivated to listen and self-evaluate their progress by making constructive use of available learning sources and feedback.

Previous Related Studies in Autonomous Listening

As regards self-access listening, prior studies attempted to increase students' listening exposure beyond the classrooms with the support of a wide array of technological tools from different perspectives. Specifically, Bozorgian and Shamsi (2022) investigated the impacts of the autonomous application of podcasts on 12 adult language learners' listening comprehension. The intervention focused on the use of metacognitive strategies by the students who listened extensively via the podcasts. The results revealed that this approach is beneficial for autonomous language learners. Most importantly, the study highlighted the importance of utilizing technology-based listening in EFL contexts where authentic input is mainly from digital sources. In a similar vein, Yang (2021) investigated 22 EFL learners' autonomous learning processes using a range of research tools, including listening logs, questionnaires, and interviews. Data was collected after the students completed a ten-week program in which they were asked to listen to TED videos. The findings revealed that metacognitive listening strategies were employed mostly by students, and the choices were decided by personal and contextual factors. What was underscored by the students was the flexibility offered by the program, in which they had more control over the listening processes. Similarly, other research also highlighted metacognitive awareness-raising for fostering listening autonomy with a focus on strategies such as keeping a listening log for self-assessment and reflection (Kemp, 2009; Ngo, 2020). Another recent study

by Vu et al. (2022) sought to examine the effectiveness of a designed listening platform for L2 listening development. The results also indicate the potential of technology-based autonomous listening environments in helping students improve their listening abilities and support teachers in resolving the dilemma over how to cater to students' individual needs in a large-sized language classroom and to respect their listening comprehension process in the Vietnamese context. This is the pressing need that the current study also attempts to address in the field of listening pedagogy.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative approach to explore the experience of a group of university students after they were involved in autonomy-based listening practice over eight weeks. The following two research questions were addressed in the study:

1. How do Vietnamese university students perceive self-access listening practices?
2. Can self-access practices promote autonomous listening?

Participants

The target population in this study was second-year students at a private university in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. 35 students, who were from different walks of life in terms of their linguistic and personal backgrounds, joined the listening practice. Their majors were also diverse, and their average age was 20 years old. At this point, the participants were enrolling in an English course level 5 at this university, which means that they were considered intermediate English learners. However, from the researcher's observation and their test scores in previous courses, these students had a low performance in listening sections and showed struggles in understanding English spoken speech due to its fast speed. Therefore, listening practice outside the classroom was a compulsory requirement of this English course. The students had to complete all the listening tasks assigned on a web-based self-access listening platform (SALP). At the end of the course, 15 students were selected to participate in the interview. These students were chosen because they completed all the tasks and showed a willingness to express their thoughts on this autonomous listening approach.

Research Instruments

Semi-Structured Interview

The main instrument for gathering data was a semi-structured interview. In this study, using interviews enabled the researcher to have a glimpse of students' experience in using a SALP by examining their thoughts and feelings. This type of interview involves a number of predetermined questions focusing on the aims of the current study. Though the items were raised in a systematic and consistent order, the researcher was allowed to probe for further explanations when necessary. There were eight open-ended questions in the interview (Appendix A). All the interviews were conducted in the participant's native language. In this way, the language barriers were kept to a minimum, and they could express their ideas freely. Each interview lasted about 20 minutes, and all were recorded and transcribed. To ensure data saturation, the researcher used a saturation grid during the interview and included an expert in the field for conducting coding transcripts (Brod et al., 2009). Besides, the researcher was also fully aware of the presence of her own personal lens during the stage of collecting and analyzing data. By recognizing and discerning her own worldview, she could mitigate biases when interpreting participants' perspectives.

Description of the Listening Platform

In this study, the SALP was created by the researcher and was embedded into Moodle for the participants to practice listening. This virtual listening space allows students to have flexibility in choosing the times and places to listen. On top of that, the design of SALP in this study focuses on respecting the personal listening process and helping low-proficient listeners to familiarize themselves with authentic listening in the earlier stages. Therefore, the attention of listeners was drawn to the prosodic features of speech, and listening was performed with a high frequency of repetitions. In addition, feedback was given in a way that listeners compared their written answers with the original transcripts.

The listening materials were taken from Preliminary English Test books [1] because the conversations in these books were authentic-like, diverse, and suitable for the participants' language level as well as the purposes of the present study. In total, there were 12 lessons or

---

[1] The series books Preliminary English Test for Schools were published by Cambridge University Press Copyright © 2010. All rights reserved.

conversations. Each lesson was designed with two main stages. In the first stage, the students listened to four sentences extracted from a conversation. For each sentence, students were allowed to listen to it with a set of repetitions (15 times) to familiarize themselves with prosodic features. After that, they tried to write down what they could hear before seeing the original transcripts for self-evaluation. In the second stage, the students listened to the whole conversation and were required to write down the main ideas and details of the conversation. Eventually, they compared their answers with the original transcripts of the audio.

Data Collection and Analysis

At the outset, 35 participants were informed about the purposes of the current investigation and then signed the consent forms. Once the students completed the listening tasks in the SALP, all their answers were checked. Although all were provided with instructions and orientations, only 25 students had regular practice with the appropriate allotted time. The others finished the listening tasks but with an uneven distribution of practice. However, only 15 out of 25 participants were willing to participate in a one-to-one interview. Despite this modest sample size, the data collected turned out to be rich enough to generate the overall picture of students' experiences involved in SALP.

After all the recordings were transcribed, the researcher analyzed them using content analysis. This method helped the researchers seek an understanding of specific phenomena systematically and objectively by quantifying a large amount of qualitative data. Four major stages suggested by Lune and Berg (2017) were applied in this study. In the decontextualization stage, the researcher familiarized themselves with the data by reading the transcribed texts. Then, codes were generated based on the meaning units. In the recontextualization stage, the researcher checked whether all aspects of the contents were covered in response to the research questions. In the categorization stage, the researcher identified themes and categories based on the coding lists. At this point, four main themes were revealed, including listening improvement, linguistic gains, practicality, and autonomy cultivation. In the compilation stage, the researcher described the patterns and made interpretations of the themes in light of related literature. Two separate raters analyzed the data based on the four stages and then met to reach a final agreement on the themes and interpretations. In this way, the reliability of the data was ensured.

Results and Discussion

The present study was designed to examine how students perceived the autonomy-based listening approach after their engagement in an online self-access platform. At the same time, the study also sought to identify whether this approach could promote learners' autonomy in listening development. The findings and interpretations are presented in response to the two research questions. Overall, students had positive perceptions of self-access listening practice, and they reported the potential features of this web-based listening platform in nurturing their autonomous listening.

Students' Positive Perceptions of Self-Access Listening

In all cases, the participants commented that SALP was useful for their listening development. It was stated that this kind of practice was appropriate for those who are not good at listening and often fall behind in classroom-based listening tasks. With its utility and practicality, this platform enabled the students to control their listening pace and progress. As one interviewee said: "I think this self-access listening practice is suitable for students who want to develop listening abilities in the earlier stages. In class, I often cannot figure out what I hear even though the recordings were played many times. Therefore, this website is very helpful and useful for my listening" (Participant 01). Indeed, the primary role of SALL, as suggested by Morrison (2008), is to increase the linguistic knowledge and proficiency of language learners, which was overlooked in traditional listening classrooms. In this case, those low-proficiency listeners need a certain degree of personalized listening time on tasks to get enough exposure to the input. These include a high frequency of listening with authentic materials, control over their comprehension process, and a collision between what can be heard and what is played. In this regard, the SALP seems to meet the individual needs of learners. Moreover, the majority of participants (13 out of 15) were aware of their listening improvement, even if it was just glacial progress or just their own self-evaluation. Some interviewees claimed that it was because of the extensive exposure to connected speed and fast speech, while others felt that it was because of their familiarity with the pronunciation of different accents. For example, one student noted:

> I feel that I have made some progress in my listening whenever I compare my answers to
> the transcripts. At first, my answers were incorrect all the time. But then, I noticed a
> change. Gradually, I could see an increase in the number of the right responses. And I

think the reason was that I listened a lot and I was exposed to the connected speech. Honestly, I was excited to see my own improvement. (Participant 05)

Consequently, the students revealed that they felt more confident in their listening abilities. This indicates the importance of learners perceiving gains in their language learning which was highlighted by Morrison's (2005) research. Self-assessment and self-reflection are essential for students to notice their own progress, which gives students confidence in navigating their autonomous listening. For Morrison (2005), this feature is one of the key elements for evaluating the success of any self-access platform.

Another theme that emerged from data analysis was the considerable advantages of the SALP in comparison to the traditional listening approach. The interviewees, on the whole, highlighted the effectiveness of the listening website. One prominent benefit was the flexibility the practice could offer. Specifically, there was more time, more space for listening, more choices of repeating the audio, more comfort, and fewer distractions during listening. Another advantageous point identified by the participants was the authentic listening sources. They believed that exposure to fast speech enabled them to improve their listening abilities. As one excerpt illustrated:

> In the classroom, I have to do the listening with many students, and the audio is controlled by my teacher. Actually, I often cannot catch up with my classmates. I think the audio is too fast for me. And this self-access listening practice gave me more comfort and more repetitions for listening. I had my own pace of listening. Most importantly, I could focus on my listening. I think in class there are many distractions. (Participant 07)

These results are in agreement with those obtained by Gardner and Yung (2017) who demonstrated that the students all agreed that SALL could provide a positive L2 learning experience, especially the flexibility of language learning. The students can choose the time and the place to learn while working at their own pace. Most importantly, for listening, this means that students have control of their listening comprehension process without any external manipulation. They can compare and contrast their interpretations of the input with the original transcripts. This collision gives listeners a space for identifying what problems they face during their listening practice, thus obtaining better comprehension for the next encounters.

Fostering Autonomous Listening With a Self-Access Approach

When asked about whether this self-access approach can foster their autonomous listening, the participants were unanimous in the view that the SALP provided a condition for them to become autonomous listeners. For these students, autonomy simply refers to the ability to learn to listen without the teacher's presence. What they had to do was to log in and follow the instructions on the website, which is also a form of guidance and orientation mentioned in the definition of proactive autonomy by Littlewood (1999). Some students admitted that self-access practices required them to actively engage in listening to achieve fruitful outcomes. Though they were unaware that full attention paid to listening stems from a motivational state within themselves, which resonates with the notion of autonomy described by Mynard and Shelton-Strong (2022), the students recognized that effort and commitment are inevitable. In the meantime, others asserted that SALP offered them a personalized listening space where they could listen at their disposal and interpret what they could hear based on their personal experiences and background knowledge. As one interviewee put it:

> I think SALP can cultivate students' autonomy because it requires them to be autonomous to complete the listening tasks. I mean, without the teacher, it is still acceptable. I can listen when I have free time. Besides, I feel that the listening tasks were not too easy or too difficult for me. You know, I could see my progress, and this motivated me to keep listening. It is exciting. (Participant 02)

In this regard, a review of the literature also confirmed that self-access practices facilitated students in building a sense of responsibility and raising their awareness of their own learning (Diaz, 2016). The findings of Chung (2013) also suggested that students held positive attitudes towards self-access learning and were aware of the given opportunities for fostering autonomy. The most striking aspect of the analysis was that some participants themselves reported that whether learner autonomy could be cultivated or not depends mainly on the students themselves. This resonates with what Littlewood (1990) argued when he discussed the concept of autonomy. In his argument, learners only become autonomous if they are willing to do what they want to do, and they can do that. In this sense, their ability to complete the tasks can be nurtured, laying the ground for building their confidence and motivation as a catalyst for their willingness. The SALP, therefore, acts as an autonomy support for listeners.

Despite its potential and usefulness, the fact that the SALP can replace the traditional listening approach was not readily acknowledged by all the participants. Three of the respondents indicated their support for a complete substitution, expressing their willingness to practice on their own. The majority of participants (nine out of 15) argued that this self-access work should be implemented simultaneously with traditional teaching. Talking about this matter, an interviewee said:

> I think the fact that this approach can replace traditional listening in class is impossible. For me, what is possible is that the two approaches can be complementary. This self-access listening platform is simply just a practice while in the classroom, I can consult my teacher if necessary. I mean, the teacher gives me lessons and more. Well, listening in class is common and students need it. (Participant 10)

These findings indicate that students are not fully prepared for self-access autonomous listening practice, which is partly in accord with what Razieyeh (2012) unveiled. In her research, it was found that students may be ready to take responsibility for some aspects of learning but reluctant to do that for other complicated tasks, such as making decisions in choosing what to learn. A possible explanation is that students are in a shortage of confidence in dealing with what they believe they are capable of doing. This accounts for the fact that three participants in the present study admitted that they preferred traditional classroom-based listening because they could turn to the teacher when in need of assistance. Apparently, these students could not resist the reliance on the teacher who has dominated the classrooms for decades, which leads to their resistance to or even lack of understanding of the purpose behind the self-access tasks (Littlejohn, 1983). The results of this study also match those discovered by Reinders and Cotterall (2001), who concluded that the value of self-access work could be overlooked by students who have been habituated to teachers' presence. In particular, the cultural backgrounds in Southeast Asia have ingrained students into the habit of considering the teacher as an authority figure (Detaramani & Chan, 1999). Overall, regardless of whether the self-access listening approach is recognized as a subordinate role for supporting the listening process shaped in the teacher-led classroom or a principal role completely replacing the brick-and-mortar listening class, these recognitions are a good indicator for a fundamental shift from traditional listening to

autonomy-based listening. Recognizing the benefits and potential of self-access listening can be a threshold for learners to develop their autonomous listening.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In brief, the study set out to explore how Vietnamese university students perceived the use of SALP, a virtual space designed for autonomously developing their listening abilities. Qualitative data were gathered via interviews with 15 participants who completed this online autonomy-based listening course. The most obvious findings emerging from this study are that the students had positive experiences in their L2 listening practices, and they were fully aware of the possibilities of this approach in assisting language learners to become autonomous in listening development. These findings contribute to several ways to our understanding of the value of self-access practices in teaching listening.

First, a self-access listening approach can not only meet the learners' personalized needs but also reflect the nature of listening development. The variation of listeners' individual differences regarding their listening pace, level, strategies, and meaning interpretations becomes less problematic thanks to this approach. Besides, exposure to authentic speech can be increased with a higher frequency of listening. In this regard, self-access listening can provide an optimal environment or autonomy support for students to gradually transfer from a state of dependence on external support to a greater capacity to act independently in their listening. Although its mere existence does not guarantee that students become autonomous listeners, it plays a crucial role in laying the foundation for cultivating autonomous listening.

Second, the success of a self-access listening approach relies on the underlying principles used for its instructional design. Therefore, the prominent technological affordances should be implemented selectively and effectively so that a self-access virtual listening platform can operate in ways that facilitate and encourage students to keep doing the listening tasks to make progress. In this study, the online listening platform was created on the premise that the meaning-making mechanism of listeners is prioritized, and fluency is strengthened by prosody familiarization. Guided by these main principles, immediate feedback is utilized to enable students to notice their transformations gradually via the forms of reflection and self-evaluation. In this way, they not only could involve their personal prior knowledge in constructing meanings but also could obtain a sense of achievement. This rewarding feeling becomes a driving force for them to complete all the self-access listening activities. As a result, they can still handle the tasks

successfully despite the absence of the teacher. Moreover, repeated listening is achieved with the features of multiple repetitions of a recording. The high frequency familiarizes listeners with fast speech at both sentence and discourse levels.

Finally, despite students' acknowledgment of the noticeable benefits of self-access listening, resistance to its replacement for traditional classroom-based listening is one of the main obstacles to implementing it widely in educational institutions for teaching listening. The findings of this study indicate the importance of students' mindset toward the role of learners and teachers. The conventional listening approach in the classroom has always favored the dominant role of teachers, which has been entrenched in their learning habits. This deep-rooted thinking should be eradicated to help learners take the initiative to become autonomous listeners and ready to adopt a self-access listening approach. This should start with orientation and training workshops for both teachers and students. Their awareness of the vital role of self-access practices in developing listening as well as in cultivating autonomy should be raised. A range of essential skills for dealing with self-access work could not be overlooked because they are the bedrock of strengthening the students' confidence and motivation to act independently in developing their listening skills. It is the educational institutions that can and should empower teachers to make this significant change regarding the particular characteristics of learners and staff in their specific contexts.

The generalization of these results is subject to certain limitations. First, the study only had a modest sample size of participants who were chosen as a convenience sample. A larger number of participants could provide more definitive evidence of the effectiveness of the self-access listening approach as well as its potential to cultivate autonomy. Another issue that was not addressed in this study was whether the self-access listening approach could improve the students' listening comprehension compared to the traditional classroom-based listening teaching approach. As the study mainly focused on exploring students' perceptions, further empirical investigations are needed to validate the use of self-access listening in this domain as well as to fully understand its potential in listening pedagogy in EFL contexts.

Notes on the Contributor

Luu Thi Mai Vy is a lecturer at the Faculty of English, Ho Chi Minh University of Economics and Finance, Vietnam. She received a Doctoral Degree in English Language Studies. Her research interest includes theories in language learning and teaching, listening development, and pronunciation.

References

Alzahrani, S., & Wright, V. (2016). Design and management of a self-access language learning space integrated into a taught course. *Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal*, *7*(2), 136–151. https://doi.org/10.37237/070203

Benson, P. (1997). The philosophy and politics of learner autonomy. In P. Benson & P. Voller (Eds.), *Autonomy and independence in language learning* (pp. 18–34). https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315842172

Benson, P., & Voller, P. (1997). *Autonomy and independence in language learning*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315842172

Bozorgian, H., & Shamsi, E. (2022). Autonomous use of podcasts with metacognitive intervention: Foreign language listening development. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *32*(3), 442–458. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijal.12439

Brod, M., Tesler, L. E., & Christensen, T. L. (2009). Qualitative research and content validity: developing best practices based on science and experience. *Quality of Life Research*, *18*(9), 1263–1278. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11136-009-9540-9

Chung, I. F. (2013). Are learners becoming more autonomous? The role of self-access center in EFL college students' English learning in Taiwan. *Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, *22*(4), 701–708. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-013-0076-y

Detaramani, C., & Chan, I. S. I. (1999). Learners' needs, attitudes and motivation towards the self-access mode of language learning. *RELC Journal*, *30*(1), 124–150. https://doi.org/10.1177/003368829903000106

Diaz, L. E. H. (2016). Exploring the students' perceptions and language learning experiences of a self-access centre. *Innovación Educativa*, *16*(71). https://www.redalyc.org/journal/1794/179446997003/html/

Dickinson, L., & Carver, D. (1980). Learning how to learn: Steps towards self-direction in foreign language learning in schools. *ELT Journal*, *35*(1), 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/xxxv.1.1

Dunkel, P. (1991). Listening in the native and second/foreign language: Toward an integration of research and practice. *TESOL Quarterly*, *25*(3), 431–457. https://doi.org/10.2307/3586979

Fatimah, A. S., Santiana, S., & Sulastri, F. (2021). Learner's experience on the use of mobile device for autonomous listening: A narrative inquiry. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, *17*(3), 193–204. https://doi.org/10.17263/jlls.903375

Field, J. (2004). An insight into listeners' problems: Too much bottom-up or too much top-down? *System*, *32*(3), 363–377. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2004.05.002

Field, J. (2009). *Listening in the language classroom*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511575945

Gardner, D., & Miller, L. (2011). Managing self-access language learning : Principles and practice. *System*, *39*(1), 78–89. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2011.01.010

Gardner, D., & Yung, K. W. H. (2017). Learner motivation in self-access language learning. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, *11*(2), 159–176. https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2015.1088545

Kemp, J. (2009). The listening log: Motivating autonomous learning. *ELT Journal*, *64*(4), 385–395. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccp099

Lamb, T., & Murray, G. (2018). *Space, place and autonomy in language learning*. Routledge.

Law, E. Y. Y. (2011). Evaluating learning gain in a self-access centre. In D. Gardner (Ed.), *Fostering autonomy in language learning*. Zirve University.

Littlejohn, A. P. (1983). Increasing learner involvement in course management. *TESOL Quarterly*, *17*(4), 595. https://doi.org/10.2307/3586615

Littlewood, W. (1999). Defining and developing autonomy in East Asian contexts. *Applied Linguistics*, *20*(1), 71–94. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/20.1.71

Lune, H. & Berg, B. L. (2017). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*. Pearson. Pearson Education Limited.

Melani, M. (2020). The effect of Google Classroom assisted extensive listening on listening comprehension across learning autonomy. *Lingua Cultura*, *14*(1), 129–142. https://doi.org/10.21512/lc.v14i1.6493

Morrison, B. (2005). Evaluating learning gain in a self-access language learning centre. *Language Teaching Research*, *9*(3), 267–293. https://doi.org/10.1191/1362168805lr167oa

Morrison, B. (2008). The role of the self-access centre in the tertiary language learning process. *System*, *36*(2), 123–140. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2007.10.004

Mynard, J. (2019). Self-access learning and advising: Promoting language learner autonomy beyond the classroom. In S. Reinders, H., Ryan, S., Nakamura (Eds.), *Innovation in language teaching and learning* (pp. 185–209). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12567-7_10

Mynard, J., & Shelton-Strong, S. J. (2022). *Autonomy support beyond the language learning classroom: A self-determination theory perspective*. Multilingual Matters. https://doi.org/10.21832/9781788929059

Ngo, T. T. (2020). Promoting learner autonomy through self-assessment and reflection. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies*, *35*(6), 146–153. https://doi.org/10.25073/2525-2445/vnufs.4483

Nguyen, H., & Abbott, L. M. (2017). Promoting process-oriented listening instruction in the ESL classroom. *TESL Canada Journal*, *34*(1), 72–86. https://doi.org/10.18806/tesl.v34i1.1256

Raya, M. J., & Vieira, F. (2021). *Autonomy in language education: Theory, research and practice*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429261336

Razieyeh, A. (2012). Readiness for self-access language learning: A case of Iranian students. *Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal*, *3*(3), 254–264. https://doi.org/10.37237/030304

Reinders, H., & Cotterall, S. (2001). Learners' perceptions and practice in self-access language learning. *The TESOLANZ Journal*, *8*, 23-38. https://innovationinteaching.org/docs/article-2001-Tesolanz.pdf

Rost, M. (2016). *Teaching and researching listening*. Pearson. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315732862

Sturtridge, G. (1997). Teaching and learning in self-access centres: Changing roles? In P. Benson & P. Voller (Eds.), *Autonomy and independence in language learning* (pp. 66–78). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315842172-6

Takano, Y., & Noda, A. (1999). A temporary decline of thinking ability during foreign language processing. *Journal of Composite Materials*, *33*(10), 928–940. https://doi.org/0803973233

Victori, M. (2007). The development of learners' support mechanisms in a self-access center and their implementation in a credit-based self-directed learning program. *System*, *35*(1), 10–31. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2006.10.005

Vu, D. C., Lian, A. P., & Siriyothin, P. (2022). Integrating natural language processing and multimedia databases in CALL software: Development and evaluation of an ICALL application for EFL listening comprehension. *Call-EJ*, *23*(3), 41–69. http://callej.org/journal/23-3/Vu-Lian-Siriyothin2022.pdf

Yang, F. Y. (2021). EFL learners' autonomous listening practice outside of the class. *Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal*, *12*(4), 328–346. https://doi.org/10.37237/110403

Zhao, Y. (2006). T*he impact of computer technology on teaching and learning English listening and speaking as a Second Language in the UK higher education* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. The University of Edinburgh. https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/9908/1/441034.pdf

Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. What do you think about the self-access listening practice that you were involved in?

2. In your opinion, what is the effect of self-access listening practice on your listening skills?

3. What do you think about this self-access listening practice compared to the listening lessons that you often study in your traditional listening class with the teachers?

4. What do you think if the listening tasks you study in class will be replaced completely by this self-access online listening practice?

5. In your opinion, did this listening approach help you to promote your listening autonomy? Why or why not?

6. Did you have any problems when you were listening through this self-access listening platform? If yes, what problems did you have?

7. Without the guidance of the teachers, do you think that you can listen on this platform by yourself? Why or why not?

8. Do you have any suggestions to improve the implementation of this listening approach based on your experience with the listening practice?