

**Using TED Talks for Extensive Listening**

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**Euodia Inge GAVENILA**

The University of Melbourne, Australia

Email: egavenila@student.unimelb.edu.au

**Mega WULANDARI**

Sanata Dharma University, Indonesia

Email: mega@usd.ac.id

**Willy A. RENANDYA**

National Institute of Education

Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Email: willy.renandya@nie.edu.sg

**Abstract**

Extensive listening (EL) is an approach to teaching listening which can help students develop their listening fluency in a more enjoyable way. However, unlike extensive reading which has now enjoyed widespread recognition, EL has received relatively little attention, partly because of the limited availability of suitable listening materials. Given the popularity of TED Talks which are freely available online, we were interested in exploring this online resource as a source of EL materials for our college EFL students. Two questions guided our research: (1) what factors are considered important by EFL students when choosing TED Talks as their extensive listening practice? (2) What benefits do they get from viewing TED Talks? The data from this case study was collected from questionnaires which were distributed to 28 sophomore students, EL journal and in-depth interviews with three students. The results showed that a number of factors influenced their selection of TED videos. Speakers' accent, speech rate, vocabulary complexity and length of the talks

were among the most frequently mentioned factors. The majority of the students reported that TED videos could help them improve their vocabulary, develop their academic skills and gain new information and knowledge.

**Keywords:** *extensive listening, extensive viewing, TED Talks, L2 listening materials, L2 learning.*

## **Introduction**

Listening is key to effective communication. Listening comprehension is defined by Hamouda (2013) as an interactive process in which listeners actively construct meaning. To construct meaning, learners draw upon content and topical knowledge and also linguistic knowledge including phonological, grammatical and discursal knowledge (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). Despite its important role in communication and despite the fact that EFL students often find listening difficult, this oral receptive skill has not been widely studied.

One approach to teaching listening that has attracted attention in recent years is extensive listening (EL). Renandya and Farrell (2010) define EL as “all types of listening activities that allow learners to receive a lot of comprehensible and enjoyable listening input” (p.56). By having this comprehensible and enjoyable listening input, students can reap the benefits of repeated exposure to interesting and rich language which can in turn facilitate the development of their listening proficiency.

One possible reason why EL is not as popular as Extensive Reading (ER) is that suitable listening materials are often not easy to find. While graded readers are now widely available, graded listening materials are rather scarce. As Ducker and Saunders (2014) point out, "graded resources for listening are not widely available" (p.383). However, with the advent of technology, teachers can now turn to freely available listening materials (i.e., podcasts) on the internet. Research studies on the use of podcasts provide promising early evidence that regular listening to podcasts can help students develop their listening skills (Ashton-Hay & Brookes, 2011; O'Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2007 as cited in Hasan & Hoon, 2013). A study conducted by Yeh (2017) on the use of

podcasts in an extensive listening project showed that students enjoyed the listening materials and more importantly, reported improvements in their listening skills.

Unlike previous studies that examined the use of podcasts for extensive listening, this study investigates the use of video-based presentations from the famous TED Talk Series. The TED series has emerged as one of the premier websites for providing presentation-based video for global viewers. TED stands for *Technology, Entertainment, Design*. Since 2006, TED Talks have been made available in the TED website (Taibi, Chawla, Dietze, Marenzi, & Fetahu, 2015). According to Taibi et al. (2015) “there are more than 1800 talks that are publicly available on the website along with a rich collection of 35,000 transcripts in over 30 languages” (p.2). The number may double or triple in the years to come as new videos are being added at a faster rate.

Given the ease of access to TED Talks, a number of listening researchers have started to investigate the extent to which the video-based talks can be productively exploited for language learning purposes. One such study was recently conducted by Takaesu (2017) who set out to examine the impact of TED Talks for extensive listening for his freshmen college students who enrolled in his English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course. The results showed that both lower and higher proficiency students improved their listening comprehension skills. Motivated by the encouraging results of Takaesu’s research study, this research aimed to investigate the language learning benefits of TED Talks for a group of EFL students in Indonesia and explored the following two questions: (1) What factors are considered important by EFL students when they choose TED Talk video for their extensive listening? and (2) What benefits do EFL students get from the use of TED Talk videos for their extensive listening?

## **Literature Review**

### **Definition and Goal of Extensive Listening**

Extensive listening (EL) is an approach to teaching listening which aims to give students more opportunity to listen to spoken English without any pressure from anyone. EL can be contrasted

with intensive listening (IL). In IL, the teacher is often the center of the instructional procedure, selecting materials and designing listening tasks for students to do in the classroom (Mayora, 2017). In EL, the students are the center; they get to set their own target, choose appropriate and personally relevant listening materials and decide what to do after they finish listening. One of the most important considerations in EL is that students listen to materials that are both enjoyable and comprehensible (Renandya & Farrell, 2010).

One of the key goals of extensive listening is to develop listening fluency (Waring, 2010), i.e., the skill that enables students to listen smoothly and effortlessly without much disruption. Rost (2011) also states that extensive listening can be “useful for improving automaticity in oral language processing” (p. 195). These goals can be achieved successfully when students choose linguistically suitable listening materials and when they do this over a period of time (Waring, 2010). In other words, the materials should be at the right level, i.e., ones that match their proficiency levels (not too easy and not too difficult either) and the contents are intrinsically appealing so that students feel motivated to do the listening for weeks, if not months.

### **Benefits and Challenges of Extensive Listening**

Numerous benefits of extensive listening have been reported in the professional literature on ELT and TESOL. These benefits can be categorized into three main themes: (i) improvement of students’ listening fluency, (ii) improvement in listening comprehension, and (iii) improvement of other language skills.

In terms of the enhancement of listening fluency, students who listen more extensively are able to deal with a faster speech rate. Students sometimes cannot comprehend spoken language simply because the speakers speak too fast. For students who have limited exposure to spoken language, speech rates can be one of the hurdles in developing L2 listening fluency. Renandya and Farrell (2010) suggest that repeated listening practice via extensive listening can gradually help L2 learners become more accustomed to listen to faster speech rates. The ability to deal with faster speech rates is believed to be a reliable indicator that students’ listening

comprehension skills have developed at a more advanced level (Renandya & Jacobs, 2016).

In terms of overall language comprehension, extensive listening can help students develop a higher degree of familiarity with common language features of the target language, which can in turns enable them to experience a higher and deeper level of comprehension. EL can help familiarize students with common features of spoken language such as assimilation, contraction, resyllabification and other forms of speech blending. These features, as reported by Renandya & Jacobs (2016), are frequently found in connected speech and often cause listening problems.

In terms of the effects on other language skills, students who listen a great deal can develop their vocabulary knowledge. As they listen to a wider variety of topics, they become more exposed to a larger range of vocabulary words. Vocabulary words encountered in meaningful contexts via listening are more likely to be learned and retained in students' long-term memory. This way of learning is referred to as incidental vocabulary learning. As Vo (2010) points out "incidental vocabulary learning from extensive listening is an effective way of acquiring vocabulary from context" (p.30). Apart from that, students can also practice their speaking skill. As a matter of fact, in a relaxing manner, they can be more attentive to academic speaking features such as the accurate pronunciation, word stress, and intonation (Vo, 2013).

Another important potential benefit comes from the flexibility and freedom to practice the skill. Because the students are in control, i.e., they select the materials they want to listen to, they tend to be more motivated to do more listening on their own, without any coercion from the teachers. It has been suggested that this type of listening is more likely to facilitate language acquisition.

Despite the numerous language learning benefits discussed above, a number of L2 listening researchers have voiced their concerns. Vandergrift & Goh (2012) for example maintain that EL alone is not sufficient to help L2 learners achieve higher listening proficiency. They suggest that a set of carefully chosen cognitive and metacognitive listening strategies can and should be taught to help students become better listeners, in particular when they are

listening to academic texts or other text types that tend to be content-heavy. We agree with them that EL and IL (where teachers focus more on teaching listening strategies) can go hand in hand and support students' listening abilities.

### **TED Talks for Extensive Listening**

There have been some studies involving the use of TED Talks in extensive listening. Takaesu (2017), for example, reported using TED Talks to teach his college EAP (English for Academic Purpose) students whose proficiency levels were quite varied. About 78% of the higher proficiency students felt that the use of TED Talks for extensive listening improved their listening skills. Nearly an equal number of the lower proficiency students (74%) reported improvements in their listening skills. This showed that even though TED Talk video podcast is a novel media, it is effective in supporting extensive listening practice among language learners.

According to Park and Cha (2013), there are several benefits of using TED Talk videos. First, TED Talk videos are interesting because they include a wide range of topics such as technology, entertainment, design, business, science, and global issues (Nurmukhamedov, 2017). Secondly, TED Talks have a distinctive "interactive transcript" feature embedded in each talk. The combination of reading while listening/viewing to video materials is a pleasantly rewarding experience. It can enhance students' motivation and comprehension of the listening materials as well.

Thirdly, TED videos are sharable. Learners can easily share the links using social media or download them as offline contents. Besides being sharable, TED Talks are also searchable "in multiple ways, including by speaker, subject, or theme" (Loya & Klemm, 2016). This aspect gives the listeners flexibility in finding topics of their interest. Lastly, TED Talks can be accessed at any time and any place as long as one is connected to the Internet. Any mobile devices such as tablets, smart phones, laptops, or computers can access TED Talks without any limit. TED Talks can also motivate and inspire students to have the eagerness to learn on their own, thus promoting self-directed and independent learning in our students (Rubenstein, 2012).

## **Methodology**

### **Method**

We employed a case study method to obtain the research data. “A case study is a type of ethnographic research study that focuses on a single unit, such as one individual, one group, one organization, or one program” (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010, p. 29). A case study method was chosen for this research because it provides an in-depth description which is holistic and rich from a particular group (Ary et.al., 2010).

### **Participants**

The participants of the study were 28 Indonesian-speaking university students enrolled in *Intermediate Listening* course. The course was mostly delivered in English. There were nine male students and nineteen female students with the age range of 18 to 20 years old. They were in their second semester at English Language Education Department, Faculty of Teachers Training and Education located in a city in Indonesia. None of them had studied abroad in an English-speaking country. The course was designed to provide learners with ample opportunities to enhance their listening proficiency. TED lectures were incorporated into this *Intermediate Listening* course. Though exercises have been assigned to students inside the classroom, additional exposure to authentic listening material outside the classroom was also needed. For accountability purposes, students were asked to keep a listening journal in which they wrote about their extensive listening activity including the quantity, duration, topic of their interest and number of new vocabulary words learned.

### **Data Gathering Techniques**

In this research, we used multiple data sources: questionnaires, EL journal and an in-depth interview. The questionnaire contained 30 close-ended questions which focused on the factors and benefits of doing EL using TED Talks.

Then, the EL journals were administered to three selected students to monitor their EL practice outside the classroom. The three students were selected based on the result of the

questionnaire in terms of the number of TED Talks videos they had agreed to watch in two weeks' time. Schmidt (2016) defined a listening journal as "a book in which students record their extensive and intensive listening practices, as well as reflections on their listening experiences" (p. 3). The students wrote on their paper-based journals for a period of 10 days . The journals contained several sections including, the date, the title of the talks, the length of the talk, the speakers, topics, and accents of the speakers (see appendix 1). Afterwards, an in-depth interview was conducted to the same three students focusing on the benefits of doing EL using TED Talks. The interview data, then, were coded and interpreted based on the emerging themes.

### **Data Analysis Technique**

To analyze the questionnaire data, the researcher collated the responses and summarized these as frequency data. The data from the EL journal and in-depth interviews were analyzed by using a simple thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a technique within information to identify, analyze and report trends (topics). It minimizes the organization and description of information set in detail (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The data mostly contained opinions and perspectives from the participants. Then, the transcripts from the in-depth interviews were categorized according to themes that emerged from the data. To ensure the reliability of the analysis, the researchers used source triangulation and theoretical triangulation (Patton, 2009). The source triangulation was done by examining evidence from different data sources (questionnaire, interview and journal) of information and using it to build a coherent justification for the themes. While, the theoretical triangulation was done by comparing the data with relevant EL constructs from the professional literature. In this research, we used Renandya & Farrell's (2010) construct of EL for our analysis. The researchers also employed intercoder reliability in order to ensure that there was consistency in the analysis of the data.

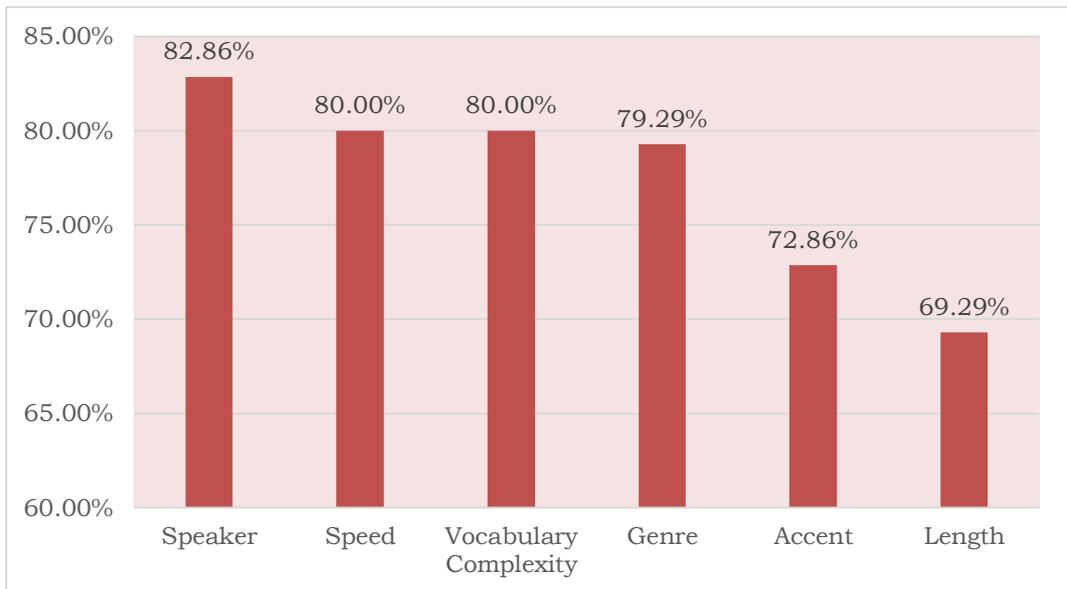
## Results and Discussions

In this section, we present the results by first reporting on students' perceptions about the factors that affected their choice of TED Talks and the perceived benefits of TED materials for their independent extensive listening/viewing activities in and out of the classrooms.

### Factors Affecting the Selection of TED Talks for EL

According to Takaesu (2017) and Renandya and Farrell (2010), students normally consider six factors when selecting listening materials, i.e., length, speaker, topic, accent, speed, and vocabulary complexity. The results provided data about students' opinions related to those factors, as can be seen in Figure 1 below.

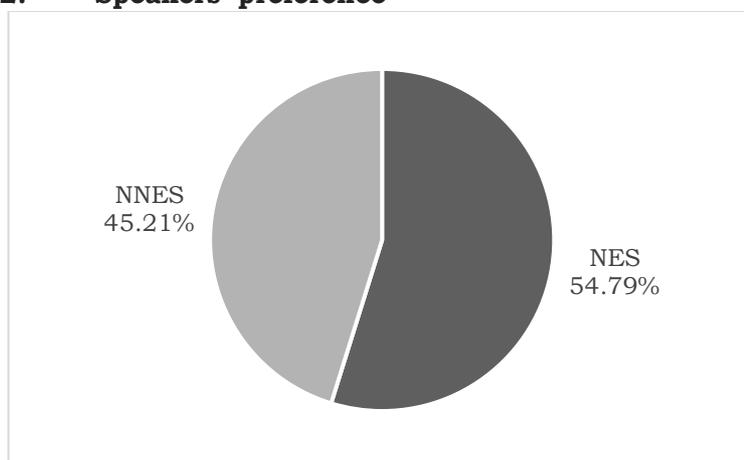
**Figure 1. General Investigation of Factors Affecting Students Selection on TED Talks for EL**



The bar graphs depict data concerning the results of the questionnaires. Factors to do with speaker, speed, vocabulary and genre are main reasons for the selection of TED videos. Accent and length of the video materials are important considerations too, but not as important as the other four factors.

**Native or Non-Native English Speakers.** As can be seen, speaker factor ranked first with a large number of students (82.86%) selecting this option in the questionnaire. The TED Talk speakers in this research refer to native English speakers (NES) and non-native English speakers (NNES). Students prefer to listen to TED Talk videos delivered by NES (54.79%) rather than those delivered by NNES (45.21%), although the difference is relatively small. This means that students in our study are more likely to watch videos delivered by native speakers of English (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Speakers' preference**



This preference was supported by the data from the three students who wrote in their journals that they mostly watched TED Talks by native English speakers.

**Table 2. Speakers Data Analysis from the EL Journals**

Respondents	Speaker		NNES' Origin
	Native English Speakers (NES)	Non-native English Speakers (NNES)	
<b>Y</b>	10	-	-
<b>P</b>	5	1	Africa
<b>G</b>	4	2	India and Turkey
<b>Total</b>	19	3	-

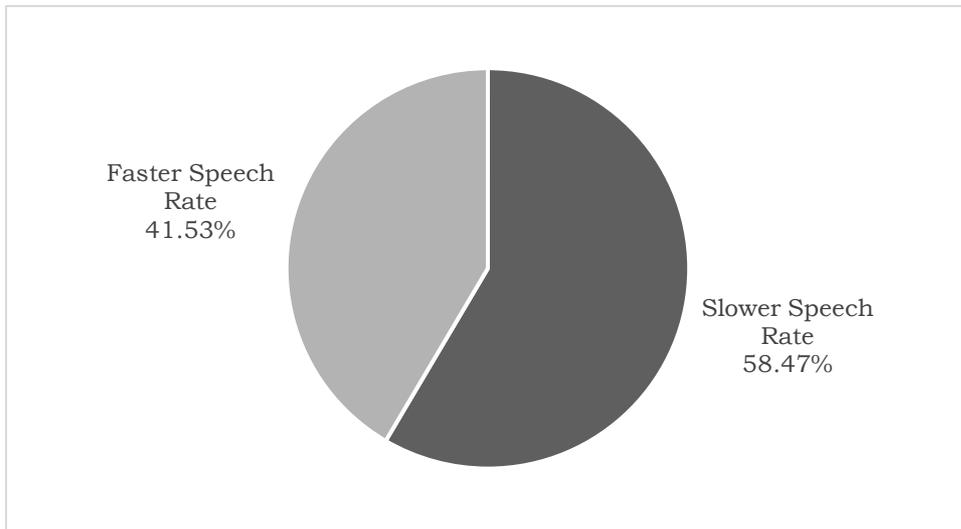
Table 2 shows that all three students were more likely to listen to TED Talks delivered by NESs. In Lindemann's (2002) view, this tendency may be caused by the listeners' expectations. In

making this comment, Lindemann suggests that the accuracy and style of the communication is perceived by listeners to be one vital component even though, in fact, it does not affect the accuracy of the content. Out of 22 TED Talks the students had chosen to watch, there were only 3 videos delivered by NNEs. The three EFL students selected NESs because they had a certain expectation about the speakers. This accuracy is probably linked to the perceived clarity of the speakers' articulation of the spoken words.

In a follow-up interview, two students reported that their preference for NESs was due to practical considerations. Respondent Y explained, "... of course I'll choose native English speakers because besides native English speakers, for example Thai or Korean, their English are not clear". They felt that native speakers spoke with greater accuracy and clarity, which better facilitated their comprehension of the contents of the talks.

**Speed.** Speed or speech rate ranked second with 80.00% of the students reporting this as a key consideration. According to Renandya and Farrell (2010), faster speech rates can have a negative impact on students' comprehension. Not surprisingly, 58.47% of the students agreed that they liked to listen to TED Talk videos which had a slower speech rate; however, 41.53% of the students felt that a faster rate was not a major concern. This data seems to suggest that even though students liked to listen to NESs, they favored NESs who spoke with the 'right' speed. Figure 3 and table 3 below display the speech rates of the TED Talk videos the students had difficulty with.

**Figure 3. Speed preference**



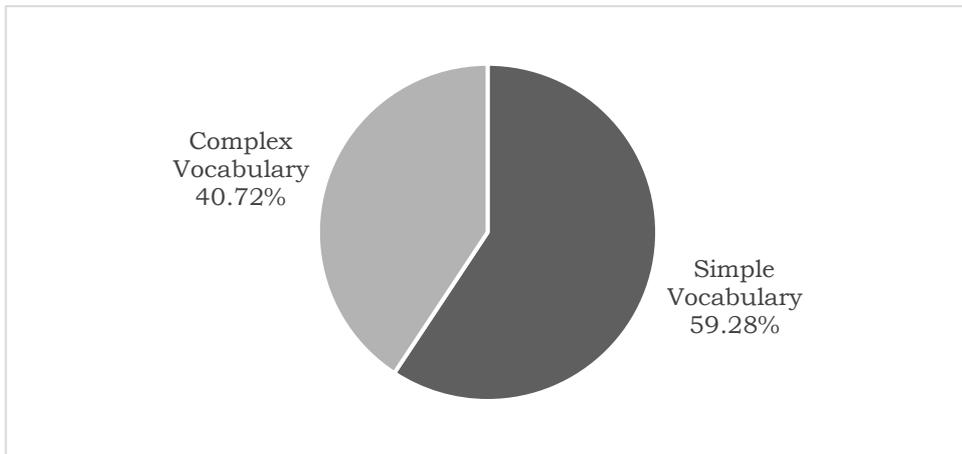
EFL students’ listening comprehension seems optimal at 127 words per minute. This suggests EFL students are more likely to encounter difficulties in listening if the speech rate is above 127 wpm (Buck, 2001 as cited in Blyth, 2012). In this study, students seemed to be struggling when listening to TED Talks with a speech rate faster than 127 wpm. As can be seen in Table 3 below, respondents Y and G had problems with fast speech rates. Respondent P, however, did not seem to have problems with speech rates. It is possible that P might have developed a higher level of listening fluency compared to Y and G.

**Table 3. Speech Rate Data Analysis from the EL Journals**

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Number of Difficult Video</b>	<b>Speech Rate for Good Comprehension (wpm)</b>	<b>Speech Rate in The Video (wpm)</b>	<b>Level of Difficulty</b>
<b>Y</b>	1	127 wpm	208 wpm	Rather Difficult
<b>P</b>	-		-	
<b>G</b>	2		229 wpm	Difficult
			233 wpm	Difficult

**Vocabulary Complexity.** A sizable number of students (80%) felt that the vocabulary load of the talks influenced their choice of TED materials. Approximately 59.28% of students chose TED Talks that contained simpler vocabulary words rather than the more complex ones (40.72%). The division of these criteria were formulated on students' viewpoints notably for their familiarity with the words contained in the TED videos. It is believed that comprehension may be difficult if the text contains more than 10% of unfamiliar vocabulary words or (Nurmukhamedov, 2017).

**Figure 4. Vocabulary Complexity Preference**



Data from the three students who kept the journals showed that they preferred watching TED Talks that contained simple to moderate levels of vocabulary difficulty. As can be seen in Table 4 below, these three students chose to watch TED Talks presented in simple language. This is not surprising as the proficiency levels of the participants in the study were mostly in the B1-B2 range on CEFR.

**Table 4. Vocabulary Data Analysis from the EL Journals**

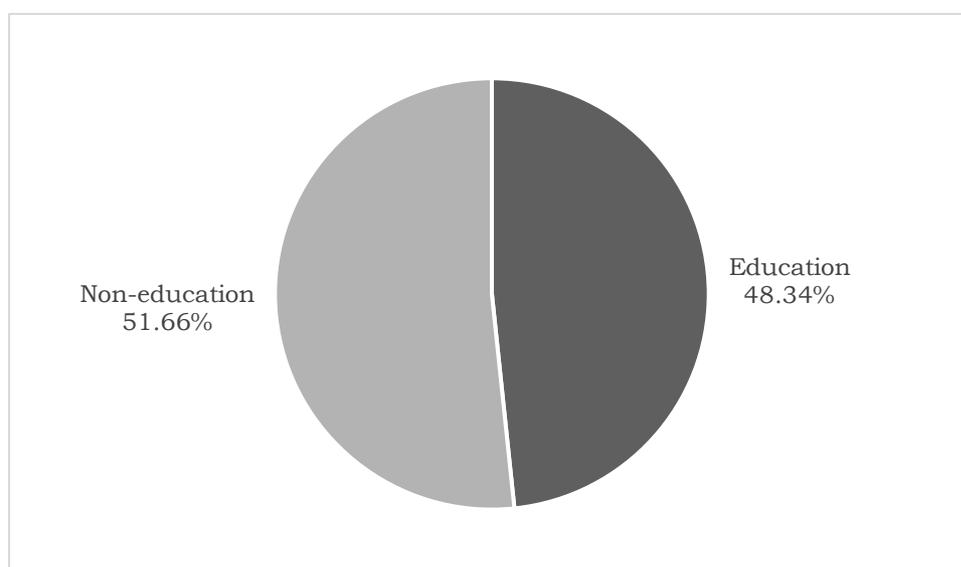
Respondent	Number of Video Based on Its Vocabulary Range		
	Complex	Moderate	Simple
<b>Y</b>	0	3	7
<b>P</b>	0	1	5
<b>G</b>	0	1	5

From figure 4 and table 4 above, respondents are more likely to select TED Talks with a simpler vocabulary range. None chose TED Talk videos with the more complex vocabulary range. During the interview, respondent Y stated that a simpler vocabulary range made the listening easier because she did not need to frequently look up some unfamiliar words in her dictionary.

It is worth noting that the TED website does not provide information about the difficulty levels of the videos. To help students choose TED Talks that match their levels of proficiency, we suggest that teachers could provide students with a list of TED materials that have been pre-selected based on their levels of difficulty. The grading can be first done by the teacher and later adjusted based on input from the students.

**Topics.** According to the data in figure 1, topic ranked fourth with the percentage of 79.29%. The questionnaire data shows that 51.66% students agreed that they listened to non-educational TED Talks more than the educational ones (48.34%). It is encouraging to see that students seem to be listening to a wide variety of topics. Research shows that wide listening can in the long run increase students' world knowledge and in turns help their oral comprehension (Zeeland & Schmitt, 2013).

**Figure 5. Topic Preference**



**Table 5. Topic Data Analysis from The EL Journals**

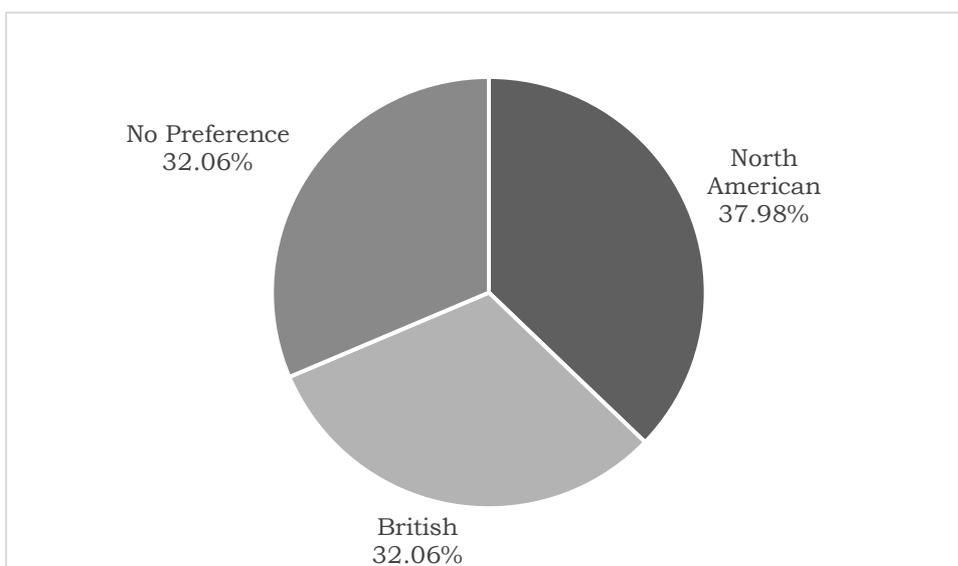
<b>Respondent Y Selected Video Topics</b>				
Education	Psychology	Entertainment	Science	
1	3	3	3	
<b>Respondent P Selected Video Topics</b>				
Sport	Environment	Psychology		
1	2	3		
<b>Respondent G Selected Video Topics</b>				
Technology	Education	Science	Entertainment	Psychology
2	1	1	1	1

From the questionnaire results in figure 5 and EL journal results in table 5 above, students' topic preference seems to be dictated by their personal interests. However, in general students seem to prefer watching non-educational topics such as sports, entertainment, technology etc. Only two respondents listened to two educational TED Talk videos. Respondent Y was more interested in watching recent news from the youth and science categories. Respondent P indicated that he was more interested in the environmental themed TED Talks. He said, "I like watching videos on the environment. The speakers usually talk about things that happen around us, so it is more realistic". Respondent G was more interested in technology. He said that "... When I watch TED Talk videos on technology, we can take the benefits from those technology or how they invented it". As Zeeland & Schmitt (2013) pointed out listening passages from various genres provide a wider variety of input rather than just input related to academic topics, thus exposing students to far richer language input.

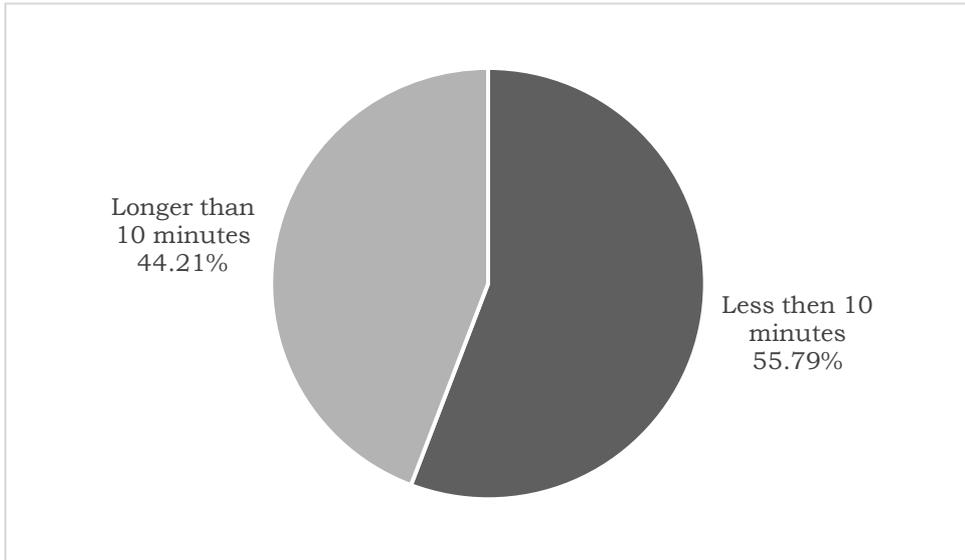
**Accent.** Figure 1 shows that accent ranked fifth with 72.86% of the students choosing this option. From the questionnaire responses, students tended to agree that they preferred to listen to TED Talk videos by speakers with a North American accent (37.98%), and British accent (32.06%), whereas about one third (32.06%) indicated that they had no issues listening to people with non-UK and US accents. Respondent G commented "*American (north) accent was more comprehensible than the others. Sometimes,*

*if I listen to other accents than American (north), what I listen is different with what they say". Siregar (2010) reported that her Indonesian students also found, American English (AE) to be more comprehensible in terms of the accent and pronunciation. Nonetheless, respondent Y and P said that they would listen to TED Talks delivered by speakers with a British accent only because of its interesting manner of speaking even though the talks may not be too comprehensible to them.*

**Figure 6. Preferred Accent**



**Length.** Length of the video ranked last with 69.29% of students choosing this option. According to the questionnaire results, students preferred to listen to TED Talks of a 10-minute duration or less (55.79%). Bloomfield, Wayland, Blodgett, and Linck (2011) suggest that the longer the listening passages are, the less students would be interested in them. Hamouda (2013) supports this statement by arguing that length could be a major problem in listening because listeners tend to “lose focus after concentrating too long on the listening” (p.130). This implies that the longer the listening passage is, the higher the risk of students failing to grasp the main idea of the content.

**Figure 7. Preferred Length****Table 6. Length Data Analysis from The EL Journals**

Respondent	Number of Videos	Length (in minutes)		
		Average	Longest	Shortest
<b>Y</b>	10	12:03	18:02	4:57
<b>P</b>	6	11:39	14:38	6:13
<b>G</b>	6	7:52	11:47	4:39

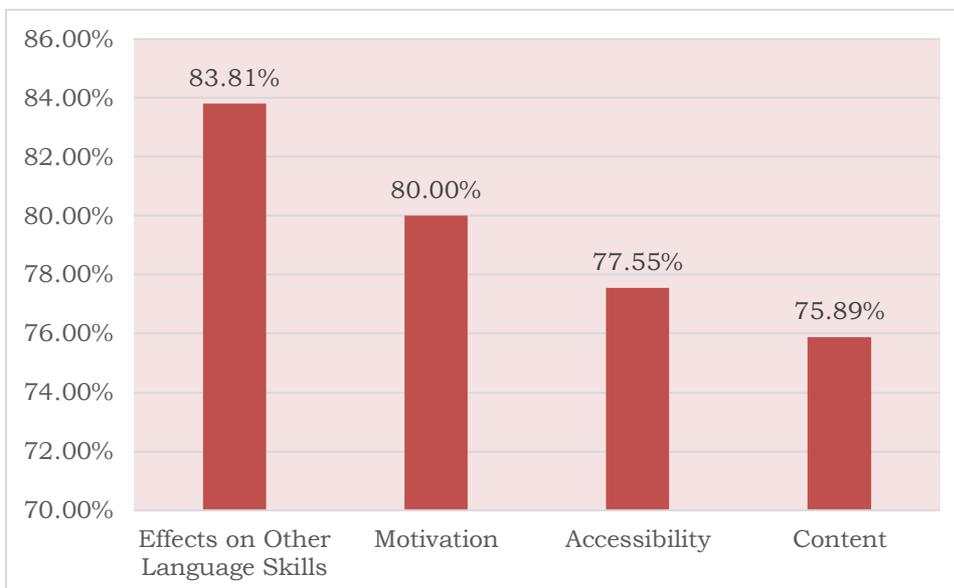
Table 6 shows that while the lengths vary, the average duration is approximately 10 minutes. During the interview, respondent Y explained that the perfect length for TED Talk videos was under 10 minutes. She mentioned *“I think it’s under 10 minutes or 15 minutes is the maximum”*. She said that the length was not an issue to her when the topics were interesting, but she would get bored when the topics were not engaging to her. Respondent P added that the ideal length of TED Talk would be 6-10 minutes. He said that *“... if the talks are more than 10 minutes, I need to spare extra attention. So, I may get bored ...”*.

### **Benefits of Using TED Talks for Extensive Listening**

Students in the study reported a number of benefits from using TED Talks for their listening development. Figure 8 below shows four major benefits: positive effects on other language skills,

motivation, accessibility and content. Each of these will be elaborated on in the following sections.

**Figure 8. Benefits of Integrating TED Talks for EL**



The graphs provide data regarding benefits students gain from watching TED videos. It is encouraging to see that a large number of students believe that watching TED Talks increase not only their listening fluency, but also their other language skills (83.84%). Moreover, TED videos help increase their motivations (80%), provide great accessibility to listening materials (77.55%), and enable them to enjoy good contents (75.89%).

**Effects on Other Language Skills.** Based on the questionnaire results, 83.81% of the students agreed that the greatest benefit from watching the TED Talks was the effect on other language skills. Renandya and Jacobs (2016) write that although the studies about the effects of extensive listening on other language learning benefits are relatively small, informal classroom evidence seems to suggest that students do enjoy numerous language learning benefits from it. Extensive listening, according to them, can help students develop their listening vocabulary through incidental vocabulary learning (Vo, 2010) which can in turn greatly facilitate

their ability to process spoken text with greater fluency and comprehension. The data reported in Table 7 below shows that the students in our study acquired plenty of vocabulary words from listening to TED videos.

**Table 7. Data Analysis of Vocabulary Learned from the EL Journals**

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Number of Video</b>	<b>Number of Vocabulary Learned</b>
<b>Y</b>	10	37
<b>P</b>	6	27
<b>G</b>	6	38

As can be seen, respondent G acquired the largest number of vocabulary words. He reported acquiring 38 new words from watching six videos. He said, "... *actually, I can learn many (vocabulary) ...*". Similarly, Respondent P was able to learn some 27 new words from the six videos that he had watched. "*I really learned many new vocabularies (from listening to TED Talk videos)*".

The number of new words the students reported to have acquired from watching the videos might seem rather small. This is not unexpected, as research into the acquisition of vocabulary via incidental learning modes (e.g., extensive listening or extensive reading) also yields similar results (see for example, Chang & Renandya, 2019). Evidence however suggests that students' depth of vocabulary knowledge can be substantially boosted via incidental learning. As a result of repeatedly encountering familiar words used in multiple contexts, students gain much deeper knowledge of vocabulary, the kind of knowledge that greatly facilitates language acquisition.

Besides vocabulary, students also reported learning how to speak more accurately using appropriate pronunciation, stress, rhythm and intonation. This happened because by listening in a relaxed manner, students felt more at ease and less pressured so they could pay attention to the segmental as well as supra-segmental features of speech (Vo, 2013). Respondent P commented "... *I receive more help on improving my speaking because it taught me how to have good gesture and reduce the speech fillers*". Respondent Y added that she experienced a boost in confidence

from listening to TED Talk videos by stating, *“I become more confident”*.

**Motivation.** Coming in second place is motivation. A large percentage of the students (80%) felt that their motivation increased as a result of watching the videos. They found that they could learn a great deal of motivation from listening to well-known people sharing useful ideas about interesting and relevant topics. The students reported that their motivation to learn English also increased after watching TED videos. In the follow-up interview, respondents Y and P explained that they could watch the videos with greater confidence and comprehension, which helped them feel more motivated to continue with their daily viewing of the TED Talks. The results here confirm an earlier study by Rubenstein (2012) who demonstrated that TED Talks helped promote self-motivation among the students.

The interview data provided more in-depth information about the effects of extensive viewing on students' motivation. All three respondents felt they were motivated to watch more so that they could continually update their knowledge. After watching a talk entitled 3 Lessons on Decision-making From A Poker Champion, respondent G said: *“I am feeling motivated (by listening to TED Talk videos) as I can learn that we can still see the positive sides from negative things like poker games...”* and *“I am happy with TED Talks because it is easy for me to learn from there.”* Similarly, respondent Y, after watching a TED Talk video “Zero Waste Life” said, *“... I feel like wanting to try to live the zero-waste life. I get the motivation although I don't know when to start it.”*

**Accessibility.** More than three quarters of the students reported that ease of access was another major benefit. All they needed was an internet-linked gadget to access thousands of free video talks in and out of the classroom. The respondents in this research gave various answers in regards to their preferences on the devices they used to watch TED Talks. Respondent P and G said that they preferred to watch TED Talk on their laptop computers. Respondent P commented, *“I'd rather watch TED Talk videos via laptop because the screen is bigger than via phone.”* However,

respondent Y chose to watch it on her mobile phone, “...when I scrolled down on Youtube and see interesting TED videos, I will immediately watch it on my phone.”

In addition, students also reported that TED Talks gave them the flexibility to access the video materials at any time or place. Respondent P commented “... I usually like to listen to TED Talk videos when I am home. I can do both; have a rest or lying down while listening to it.”. Respondent G from his perspective said, “I listen to TED Talk when I open YouTube and got free time...”. As Sweeney (2006) pointed out, this behavior is typical of today’s youth; they enjoy multi-tasking activities, reading, studying and listening to music at the same time as using their smart phones.

**Content.** TED Talks cover a wide range of carefully curated topics presented in an interesting manner by seasoned speakers. Not surprisingly, contents ranked quite high in our study with some 75% of the students saying that they liked watching TED Talks because of their high interest contents. Table 8 below shows a list of several topics that our three students watched during the study.

**Table 8. Data Analysis of Accessed TED Talk Videos from the EL Journals**

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Title</b>
<b>Y</b>	1 Want to Learn Better? Start Mind-Mapping
	2 Being An Introvert is A Good Thing
	3 How Dogs Love Us
<b>P</b>	1 How Augmented Reality Will Change Sports ... and Build Empathy
	2 A New Way to Remove CO2 from The Atmosphere
	3 Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance
<b>G</b>	1 Where Do Your Online Returns Go?
	2 How Video Games Turn Players into Storytellers
	3 A Rare Galaxy That’s Challenging Our Understanding of The Universe

One obvious benefit the students could obtain from TED Talks is that most of the talks touch on current issues on a wide range of topics. Students could listen to lectures on the latest developments of technology, on ground-breaking research on artificial intelligence and how it can be used to improve the quality

of life, etc. On a lighter side of things, students could simply sit back and enjoy humorous talks. Evidence suggests that humour can increase students' interest and motivation in language learning. A study by Alm (2013) for example showed that the majority of EFL students in his study enjoyed listening to humorous podcasts, which according to them helped increase their motivation to learn the target language.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this research was to investigate of the use of TED Talks for extensive listening with EFL students. We explored two research questions: (1) what factors are considered important by EFL students when they choose TED Talk videos for their extensive listening activities? and (2) what benefits do they get from the watching TED Talks? The results show that students' choice of TED Talks was guided by such factors as who the speakers were, the speech rate of the talks, the complexity of vocabulary used in the talks, the topics, the accents of the speakers, and the length of the videos. As for the perceived benefits of watching TED Talks, the majority of students reported that frequent viewing of TED videos helped them acquire new vocabulary, develop their listening fluency and comprehension, and improve their motivation. They also reported that ease of access to TED Talks and their highly stimulating contents were two of the main reasons that motivated them to watch more TED Talks.

Given the largely positive perceptions of the students on the use of TED Talks for their independent listening practice, we urge our fellow classroom teachers to explore the TED site and compile a list of videos that suit the linguistic and affective needs of their students. We believe that one of the best ways to improve listening/viewing skills is by engaging students in doing frequent listening/viewing of relevant and interesting materials. TED videos are a great source of compelling viewing materials. However, some information might not be available on the TED Talks website. Thus, a list that provides information about the difficulty levels of the videos could be prepared for the students.

## About the Authors

Euodia Inge Gavenila is a graduate student currently pursuing a master's degree in TESOL at the University of Melbourne, Australia. In 2019, she was awarded with a scholarship from the Indonesian government known as the Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education (LPDP). She received a bachelor's degree in English Language Education from Sanata Dharma University in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Her primary research interests are technology and globalisation in education.

Mega Wulandari is a faculty member of the English Language Education Study Program, Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. She obtained both her Bachelor's and Master's degree from English Department of Sanata Dharma University. Her research interests include Technology-enhanced language learning, language teaching media, contextual learning, and material design. She recently published a book co-authored with Truly Almendo entitled "Technology for English Language Learning".

Dr. Willy A Renandya is a language teacher educator currently teaching at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University. He is a frequent speaker at language conferences in the Asian region. His teaching and research interests include second and foreign language pedagogy and extensive reading. He has published research articles in various journals, authored an ESL textbook, and edited numerous books and anthologies.

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### Appendix I: EL Journal

**MY TED JOURNAL**

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_



**A. ABOUT THIS TED-TALK**

<b>VIDEO TITLE</b> _____	<b>WEBSITE</b> _____
<b>SPEAKER'S NAME</b> _____	<b>LENGTH OF VIDEO</b> _____

**GENRE OF VIDEO (CIRCLE ONE)**

Technology	Science	Entertainment	Other:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Art	Psychology	Education	.....

**SUMMARY OF THE VIDEO (1 OR 2 SENTENCES)**

\_\_\_\_\_

**VOCABULARY I LEARN FROM THE VIDEO**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _____	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _____	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _____	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _____	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _____	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _____

### MY TED JOURNAL

#### B. SELF-ASSESSMENT

*Put a tick in a circle you think is the best!*

Criteria	Yes	No	Maybe
The speed was easy to catch	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The vocabulary was easy to be understood	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The pronunciation was comprehensible	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This helped my listening skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think my listening skills are improving	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**I need to improve (please circle all that apply):**

listening to main ideas / listening to details / listening to numbers /  
 listening to fast speech / listening to connected speech / listening  
 for a long time / listening to other accents / my vocabulary / my  
 pronunciation

