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Exploring University Students' Listening Self-Efficacy and Its Role in Oral Fluency Development

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ABSTRACT

The findings of this study revealed distinct differences between fourth- and sixth-semester students in how they processed listening activities and how these differences influenced their oral fluency. Fourth-semester students often relied on word-by-word comprehension and mental translation, which led to stress, hesitations, and disrupted speech flow. In contrast, sixth-semester students demonstrated meaning-focused listening strategies, enabling quicker responses, more structured discourse, and enhanced fluency. Observations and documentation further confirmed that greater exposure to authentic listening materials contributed to more stable speech rhythm, sustained continuity, and heightened confidence in oral production. The main practical implication of this study is that English language educators should place stronger pedagogical emphasis on authentic listening practice and meaning-oriented strategies rather than word-for-word comprehension. By designing classroom activities that encourage students to focus on main ideas, process listening input more efficiently, and build confidence in their listening abilities, educators can directly reduce students' anxiety and foster more stable oral fluency. This contribution is significant because it provides a clear instructional pathway: improving listening experiences not only enhances comprehension but also builds psychological readiness and communicative competence, which are essential for success in higher education language learning contexts.

Keywords: Development of Speaking Fluency; Listening Skills; Roles; Students

INTRODUCTION

English language proficiency in higher education is increasingly understood not merely as mastery of grammar and vocabulary, but as comprehensive communicative competence that integrates listening and speaking skills (Garcia, 2022; Kyrychenko et al., 2024). In the context of globalization, students are expected to comprehend spoken information rapidly, respond appropriately, and articulate ideas fluently (Dasam, 2025; Mardiningrum & Ramadhani, 2022). Despite their interdependence, listening and speaking are often treated as separate skills in instructional practice, potentially overlooking the cognitive link between

auditory input processing and oral production. Listening serves as the foundation for second language acquisition, providing learners with exposure to sound patterns, syntax, and rhythm that shape mental representations for speech (Rost, 2024; Rost & Brown, 2022). Without effective listening input, spoken production tends to be fragmented and unnatural. This study therefore seeks to explore how listening self-efficacy influences oral fluency among English Education students at Universitas Klabat, focusing on differences between fourth- and sixth-semester cohorts.

When listening comprehension is automatic, cognitive space is freed for fluent speech; when listening requires conscious effort, speaking becomes disjointed. Accordingly, this study aims to investigate the extent to which listening self-efficacy contributes to oral fluency development among English Education students at Universitas Klabat, with particular attention to differences between fourth- and sixth-semester cohorts. Specifically, it seeks to answer the research question: How does listening self-efficacy influence oral fluency performance in university-level English learners, and what variations emerge across different stages of study?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Listening is the initial foundation for second language acquisition (Rost, 2024; Rost & Brown, 2022). Through listening, learners gain exposure to sound patterns, syntactic structures, lexical choices, intonation, and rhythm. This exposure forms mental representations that serve as the foundation for language production. Without adequate and effectively processed input, spoken production tends to be hampered, fragmented, and less natural. In the context of English Language Education students, listening is not merely a means of understanding lecture material or answering test questions, but rather the primary medium for building linguistic repertoire that will be used in speaking practice, academic presentations, class discussions, and professional communication.

Fieldwork shows that not all students are able to transform their listening skills into oral fluency. Some students demonstrate quite good listening performance in test contexts, but still experience long pauses, hesitations, and repetitions when speaking (Novia et al., 2025). Conversely, some students are relatively confident in speaking even though their listening comprehension is not always perfect (Kasriyati et al., 2023; Purwati et al., 2022). This disparity raises fundamental questions how do cognitive processes in listening actually influence fluency? Are there differences in the experiences of students at different semester levels in processing auditory input? And how do these subjective experiences contribute to the development of oral fluency? These questions become even more relevant when linked to the cognitive dimension of language learning. Listening is not a passive activity that simply receives sounds, but rather a complex and simultaneous mental process. Students must perform phonological decoding, recognize vocabulary, process sentence structures, connect new information with prior knowledge, and continuously monitor their understanding. This process takes place in a very short

time and demands adequate working memory capacity. If cognitive resources are fully absorbed in understanding input, the capacity for fluent language production can be reduced. In other words, cognitive load at the receptive stage has the potential to affect the quality of spoken output.

In the context of higher education, fourth- and sixth-semester students of the English Language Education Program at Universitas Klabat are generally at different stages of competency development. Fourth-semester students are still in the basic consolidation stage, where language processing strategies tend to be bottom-up and rely on word-for-word translation. Meanwhile, sixth-semester students generally have longer learning experiences, broader language exposure, and more efficient and holistic processing strategies. This difference opens up space to explore how varying levels of academic experience influence how students interpret listening and how this impacts fluency. In addition to cognitive aspects, affective dimensions such as self-confidence and perception of one's own abilities also play a significant role. Students who feel capable of understanding auditory input tend to be calmer and more willing to take risks when speaking. Conversely, students who frequently experience failures in listening comprehension may develop anxiety and doubt, leading to impaired fluency. Thus, listening is not only related to understanding meaning but also shapes mental attitudes and performative readiness in oral communication.

Previous research has extensively discussed listening from the perspective of learning strategies, the effectiveness of teaching methods, and its correlation with test results. However, studies specifically examining the cognitive dimension of listening in relation to fluency development phenomenologically are still relatively limited, especially in the context of English Language Education students in Indonesia. Most studies tend to use a quantitative approach that measures scores or strategy frequencies, thus not delving into the subjective experiences of students as the main actors in the learning process. However, a deeper understanding of how students experience, feel, and interpret the listening process can provide a richer perspective on the internal mechanisms that influence speaking fluency. For example, Manalu et al., (2024) found that the implementation of thorough preparation, consistent speaking practice, anxiety management techniques such as visualization and breathing, and the use of role-play and project-based learning significantly improved the confidence and speaking skills of Electrical Engineering Education students in presenting technical ideas effectively (Manalu et al., 2024). Hananuraga et al., (2026) that the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) significantly improves students' communication skills by providing adaptive exercises, instant and objective feedback, and a safe learning environment, thereby strengthening self-confidence and accelerating mastery of communication competencies (Hananuraga et al., 2026).

This gap is the basis for this research. This study seeks to explore the experiences of fourth and sixth-semester students in processing listening and identify their implications for oral fluency. Using a phenomenological approach, this study not

only seeks to describe differences in performance but also to uncover the lived experience behind these processes. The research focuses on cognitive dimensions such as processing speed, working memory capacity, comprehension strategies, and comprehension monitoring, and how these aspects are articulated in speaking practice. Conceptually, this study positions listening and speaking in a dynamic and mutually influential relationship. Fluency is understood not solely as speaking speed, but as the stability of speech production that reflects the efficiency of language processing. When auditory comprehension occurs automatically and does not overload consciousness, students have more cognitive space to construct structured and fluid oral responses. Conversely, when listening still demands a high level of conscious control, speaking tends to be disjointed and deliberate.

The urgency of this research also lies in its implications for learning practice. If it is proven that listening processing maturity contributes significantly to fluency development, then listening instruction needs to be designed not only to pursue literal comprehension but also to train automaticity and cognitive efficiency. Learning approaches can be directed at increasing authentic exposure, strengthening inference strategies, and developing tolerance for ambiguity. Thus, listening is no longer positioned as a preparatory activity before speaking, but rather as a foundation that directly shapes the quality of oral production. This research is expected to provide a conceptual contribution in understanding the relationship between the receptive and productive dimensions in English learning in higher education. By examining students' experiences in depth, this study seeks to offer a more integrative perspective on how listening shapes fluency, not only at the performance level, but also at the level of mental processes and learning experiences. Through this understanding, it is hoped that pedagogical approaches can be formulated that are more responsive to students' cognitive and affective needs in developing authentic and sustainable oral communication competencies. This study aims to explore students' levels of listening self-efficacy and analyze its role in supporting the development of oral fluency in the context of English learning in higher education.

METHOD

Design and Sample

This study used a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design to deeply understand students' subjective experiences in interpreting the listening process and its implications for speaking fluency (Pahleviannur et al., 2022; Smith, 2024). The phenomenological approach was chosen because it allowed researchers to explore the meaning of students' lived experiences in a reflective and contextual manner, particularly in the context of learning English as a foreign language. The research focused on how students process auditory input, how they perceive cognitive load while listening, and how these experiences influence their speaking performance. The study participants were fourth- and sixth-semester English Language Education students at Universitas Klabat, selected purposively based on their active

involvement in the Listening and Speaking courses. The selection of these two semester levels was intended to obtain a variety of experiences and varying depths of language processing. The number of participants was determined gradually until saturation point was reached, when the data obtained showed recurring patterns and no longer yielded significant new information.

Instruments and Procedures

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and documentation analysis. Interviews provided insight into students' strategies for understanding listening materials and their perceptions of how listening influences fluency. Classroom observations captured spontaneous responses during listening and speaking activities, offering a naturalistic view of how auditory input was processed in real time. Documentation, including recordings of speaking practice and academic grades related to listening and speaking, served to triangulate and verify findings from interviews and observations. Together, these methods created a rich dataset that reflected both subjective experiences and observable behaviors.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted thematically, following a structured process to ensure clarity and rigor. All interviews were transcribed verbatim, observation notes were compiled immediately after sessions, and documentation was systematically organized for verification. The analysis began with open coding, where meaningful segments of text were labeled to capture students' experiences with listening comprehension, cognitive load, and fluency. These codes were then grouped into broader categories, such as "confidence in comprehension" and "fluency disruptions," before axial coding was applied to connect categories and extract the essential meaning of the lived experiences. This iterative process allowed the researcher to move from raw data to conceptual themes that reflected the cognitive dimensions of listening and their impact on oral fluency.

To ensure reliability, the primary researcher conducted the initial coding, while an independent faculty member specializing in applied linguistics reviewed approximately 30% of the transcripts. Any discrepancies were discussed until consensus was reached, and the codebook was refined accordingly. Inter-coder reliability was assessed through percentage agreement, which exceeded 85%, indicating strong consistency. Validity was strengthened through triangulation across interviews, observations, and documentation, member checking with participants to confirm interpretations, and the maintenance of an audit trail that documented analytic decisions and reflections throughout the process. The researcher also employed epoché, or bracketing, to consciously set aside personal assumptions and minimize bias, thereby preserving the authenticity of participants' perspectives.

Through these procedures, the study ensured that the methodological process was both comprehensive and trustworthy. The combination of purposive sampling, multiple data collection techniques, and rigorous thematic analysis provided a nuanced understanding of how listening self-efficacy shapes oral fluency development. By integrating subjective accounts with observational and documentary evidence, the research produced a holistic view of the cognitive processes underlying listening and speaking in higher education language learning.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Students' Subjective Experiences of the Listening Process

The research results show that the listening experience of English Language Education students at Universitas Klabat**,** particularly those in Semesters 4 and 6 is not simply understood as an academic activity involving answering questions, but as a complex and multi-layered cognitive and emotional process. Based on in-depth interviews, most Semester 4 students described listening as "nerve-wracking" and "concentration-draining." They revealed that when audio was played, their primary focus was on grasping each word literally. One participant stated that she felt "panicked when she didn't recognize a single word because she was afraid of missing the overall meaning." This statement indicates that the listening experience at this stage is still oriented toward bottom-up linguistic decoding, with a high emphasis on lexical accuracy.

This experience is characterized by conscious processing. Semester 4 students tended to describe the listening process as requiring "hard effort," "guessing the meaning," and "repeating in their heads." Classroom observations reinforced these findings: during listening comprehension sessions, students looked down, took notes intensively, and displayed tense expressions when the audio played without pause. When the lecturer asked them to respond verbally after listening, long pauses and hesitations often emerged. This indicates that the high cognitive load of understanding input directly impacts readiness for oral production. In contrast to Semester 4, Semester 6 students demonstrated a significant transformation in their experience. In interviews, they more often described listening as a "process of understanding ideas," rather than simply capturing words. One participant stated that she no longer focused on individual words, but rather on "the flow of conversation and the speaker's intent." Phenomenologically, the listening experience at this stage was more reflective and integrative. They demonstrated the ability to tolerate misunderstandings of some vocabulary without losing the overall meaning.

Observations in Semester 6 classes revealed striking behavioral differences. Students appeared more relaxed, less reliant on word-for-word recording, and more responsive when asked to provide spontaneous responses after listening. Their verbal responses tended to be more fluent and with fewer long pauses. This indicates a shift from conscious processing to more automatic processing. Listening

was no longer experienced as a burden, but rather as a source of understanding that supported oral expression. From an affective perspective, Semester 4 students associated listening with performative anxiety. They felt that failure to understand audio would have direct implications for their speaking ability. Conversely, sixth-semester students revealed that the more they were exposed to authentic input such as podcasts, academic videos, and native speaker discussions, the more their confidence increased when speaking. Academic documentation, including presentation assignment grades and speaking practice recordings, showed that students with higher listening scores tended to have more stable fluency, particularly in aspects of continuity and reduced hesitation.

Documentation findings also indicated that sixth-semester students were more actively accessing listening resources outside of class, such as digital platforms and authentic English-language materials. This was not often found in fourth-semester students. These additional activities appeared to enrich input exposure and strengthen the internalization of language patterns. In interviews, several sixth-semester students mentioned that they often "imitate the intonation and expression" of the audio they hear. This imitation process is not always conscious, but is identified through observation when they speak with a more natural rhythm and prosody.

Cognitive Dimensions in Listening Ability and Their Implications for Fluency

Student experiences demonstrate that listening skills are not solely related to understanding discourse content but involve a series of complex cognitive processes that directly impact fluency. Based on in-depth interviews, fourth-semester students generally described listening as requiring “quick thinking,” “translating in my head,” and “connecting word fragments.” These descriptions demonstrate a predominance of bottom-up processing that relies on simultaneous phonological decoding and vocabulary matching. One fourth-semester participant stated that when listening to normal-speed conversations, she felt like her brain was “a few seconds behind.” This statement indicates limitations in processing speed and working memory. Classroom observations revealed that students at this level frequently requested audio repetition and struggled to respond verbally immediately after listening sessions. Long pauses before speaking and the use of fillers such as “uh…” or “what is it…” indicate that their cognitive resources were being depleted by understanding the input, leaving insufficient capacity for fluent production.

Documentation in the form of recordings of speaking practice showed a consistent correlation: students who struggled to comprehend complex audio tended to exhibit fragmented speech, repetitive self-repair, and frequent pauses. This demonstrates that cognitive load at the input stage impacts output fluency. Sub-automatic listening results in speaking remaining at the conscious construction stage, where students construct sentences gradually and carefully. In contrast, sixth-semester students exhibited different processing characteristics. In interviews, they rarely mentioned "translating" explicitly. Most stated that they "instantly understood the

meaning" or "imagined the situation." These statements indicate a shift from lexical decoding to schema-based processing. Phenomenologically, the listening experience at this stage is more holistic and automatic.

Observations support these findings. When presented with listening material with a high level of complexity, including diverse accents, sixth-semester students demonstrated faster and more stable responses. They were able to summarize main ideas spontaneously without needing detailed notes. In follow-up discussions, their oral production was relatively fluid, with more complete sentence structures and shorter pauses. This indicates increased automaticity in language processing. In terms of working memory, sixth-semester students appeared better able to retain auditory information for longer periods of time. In one observation session, students were asked to listen to a three-minute presentation without pause and then provide an argumentative response. The majority of Semester 6 students were able to construct a structured response with minimal loss of key information. In contrast, Semester 4 students tended to only remember fragments of information and had difficulty reconstructing the flow of ideas.

Another dimension identified was comprehension monitoring. Semester 6 students reflectively recognized when they lost understanding but did not display excessive panic. They used context-based inference strategies to fill in gaps in meaning. In interviews, one student stated that he "didn't need to understand every word to be able to re-talk about the topic." This demonstrates a growing tolerance for ambiguity and cognitive efficiency in processing input. Academic grade documentation showed that students with high listening scores tended to achieve better fluency assessments in the Speaking for Academic Purposes course. Analysis of the recordings revealed that these students had a more stable speech rate and fewer fluency breakdowns. These findings support the hypothesis that the speed and efficiency of auditory input processing contribute to fluent verbal production.

Research findings reveal fundamental differences in the experiences of fourth- and sixth-semester students in interpreting listening. For fourth-semester students, listening is still perceived as an activity that demands full concentration, is full of pressure, and is oriented towards accurate word-by-word recognition. This process is undertaken consciously and intensely, accompanied by anxiety when unfamiliar vocabulary is encountered. Classroom observations revealed tense expressions, excessive note-taking, and long pauses when asked to respond verbally. Sixth-semester students demonstrated a more integrative experience. They focused on understanding ideas, discourse flow, and the speaker's intent, rather than solely on lexical details. Their oral responses tended to be more fluent, with more controlled pauses. Academic documentation supports these findings: students with broader listening exposure demonstrated more stable speaking performance, particularly in aspects of speech continuity and hesitation reduction.

The essential meaning of this experience demonstrates that listening is not simply a receptive skill, but rather a space for developing cognitive and emotional

readiness for speaking. In the initial stages, listening is experienced as a tiring decoding activity because the cognitive load is focused on recognizing language forms. However, over time and with consistent exposure, this experience transforms into a more comprehensive process of meaning-making. This transformation isn't just a technical development, but a shift in how students relate to language. Listening is no longer a source of anxiety, but rather a foundation for confidence in oral production. In other words, the development of fluency begins with a change in the quality of the listening experience itself.

These findings align with the Second Language Acquisition perspective, which positions listening as the primary source of linguistic input (Krashen & Mason, 2022; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Sixth-semester students who are better able to interpret input globally demonstrate the characteristics of learners who have internalized comprehensible input. Cognitively, the shift from lexical focus to ideational comprehension reflects the integration of bottom-up and top-down processes as described by Field (2008) (Field, 2008). When students are no longer fixated on individual words, schemas and contextual predictions begin to function effectively (Field, 2008). Furthermore, these findings reinforce Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory. Students who have successful experiences in understanding input demonstrate higher confidence when speaking (Bandura, 1997). This mastery experience reduces performative anxiety and increases communicative readiness. Thus, empirical data supports the assumption that listening self-efficacy is an important mediator between language comprehension and production.

Although the Input Hypothesis theory emphasizes the importance of input exposure, it tends to underemphasize the affective dimension and subjective experience of learners. This research data suggests that the quality of the listening experience whether experienced as stressful or as a meaningful process significantly determines its impact on speaking (Fatoni & Meita, 2022; Indasari, 2025; Mulyadi & Mutmainnah, 2015; Rahman et al., 2021). Similarly, self-efficacy theory places greater emphasis on individual beliefs but does not elaborate on the cognitive mechanisms linking auditory comprehension to production fluency. In practice, processing efficiency and automaticity Segalowitz, (2010) appear to play a significant role, but these aspects have not been fully integrated into the classical self-efficacy framework. This means that these theories are relevant but do not fully explain the complexity of students' phenomenological experiences (Doe, 2017; Strecker et al., 1998).

From the perspective of Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller), students' experiences in Semester 4 can be understood as a state of overload due to the high burden of phonological and lexical processing. When working memory is overwhelmed by decoding efforts, the capacity to design oral responses becomes limited (Sweller, 2011). Meanwhile, Segalowitz's (2010) Automaticity theory helps explain changes in Semester 6. Repeated exposure to authentic input accelerates lexical access and refines the coordination between comprehension and production. This automaticity makes oral responses more fluid (Doe, 2017; Strecker et al., 1998). From the

perspective of Communicative Language Teaching (Soro et al., 2023; Syahrin & bin As, 2020), positive listening experiences are also related to the integration of skills and exposure to language in meaningful contexts. Students who actively access authentic podcasts and videos demonstrate sustained interaction with the target language, as recommended in the communicative approach.

Synthesized, these findings suggest that the subjective experience of listening is the intersection of three key dimensions: linguistic input, cognitive efficiency, and self-efficacy. Meaningful input enriches the internal language system (Krashen), processing efficiency enables automaticity (Segalowitz), and successful comprehension strengthens self-efficacy (Bandura). These three elements reinforce each other in a developmental cycle. Good listening comprehension increases feelings of competence; competence decreases anxiety; low anxiety facilitates production; and fluent production reinforces subsequent experiences of success. The theoretical contribution of this research lies in the assertion that the development of fluency is listening-mediated. Fluency is not simply the result of speaking practice but rather a reflection of the maturity of listening experiences that have been internalized cognitively and affectively.

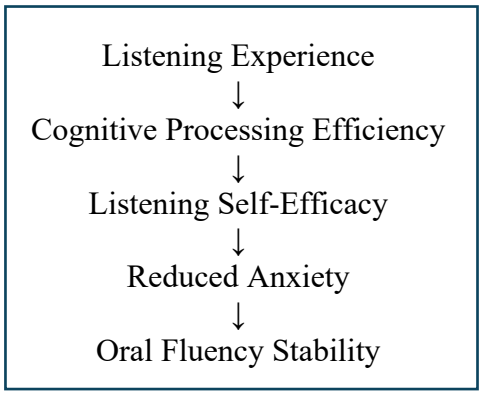

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Listening Self-Efficacy and Oral Fluency Development

This model offers an extension of the conventional paradigm, which tends to be speaking-oriented. In the context of higher education, strengthening listening is not merely a strategy to improve comprehension, but a long-term investment in building authentic and sustainable speaking fluency. Thus, this study not only confirms existing theories but also proposes a repositioning of listening as a psych cognitive foundation in developing EFL students' fluency.

The research results show that differences in semester level are associated with differences in the quality of cognitive processing in listening. Fourth-semester students tended to experience listening as a mentally draining activity. They described it as a process of "thinking fast," "translating in their heads," and trying to connect pieces of sound. As speech rate increased, some felt left behind and lost track of meaning. Classroom observations revealed frequent requests for audio repetition, long pauses before speaking, and the use of fillers to signal hesitation.

Recordings of speaking showed that students who struggled to understand complex input tended to produce disjointed speech filled with self-correction. In contrast, sixth-semester students demonstrated more mature processing patterns. They no longer emphasized conscious translation but instead directly grasped the intent and context of the conversation. Their responses to listening material were relatively quick and structured. In follow-up discussions, their speech was more fluid, with coherent sentence structures and more controlled pauses. Academic grades showed that students with better listening performance tended to exhibit stability in their speech rate and minimal breakdowns in fluency. Overall, these findings demonstrate a clear relationship between efficient cognitive processing in listening and speaking fluency. The fundamental significance of this finding lies in the fact that fluency is not simply a matter of speaking ability, but rather a reflection of cognitive readiness developed through listening experience. When input processing is still conscious and fragmented, spoken production is slow and deliberate. However, when auditory comprehension has moved toward an automatic and integrated stage, the resulting speech becomes more stable and fluid. Thus, the quality of fluency is truly rooted in how language is processed in the mind before it is spoken.

These findings align with the view that listening is the foundation of second language acquisition (Krashen & Mason, 2022; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Students who have achieved a global understanding of input demonstrate the characteristics of learners capable of optimally utilizing comprehensible input (Ibarra-Balarezo & Guaman-Luna, 2025; Polat, 2016). From a cognitive perspective, the data demonstrates the interaction between bottom-up and top-down processes as described by Field (Field, 2008). In the early stages, the dominance of phonological decoding burdens working memory, while in the later stages, the integration of schemas and inferences makes processing more efficient. This condition also supports Segalowitz's theory of automaticity, which asserts that fluency emerges when linguistic processes no longer require full conscious control. Semester 6 students who are able to respond spontaneously indicate that some processes have been internalized. In fact, these findings resonate with Bandura's self-efficacy theory: consistently successfully understanding input builds a sense of competence, which in turn reduces hesitation when speaking.

Although the Input Hypothesis emphasizes the importance of language exposure, it does not adequately explain individual variations in processing speed and working memory capacity (White, 1987). The data in this study indicate that two students with relatively equal exposure can exhibit different fluency performance due to differences in cognitive efficiency. Similarly, self-efficacy theory places significant emphasis on self-confidence but does not fully unravel the mental mechanisms that bridge auditory comprehension and oral production (Bandura, 1997). While automaticity explains aspects of speed and fluency, it does not adequately highlight the affective dynamics that influence performance. This means that each theory provides a partial explanation but does not fully capture the complexity of students' experiences as revealed in the data.

Cognitive Load Theory helps explain why fourth-semester students appear to experience mental fatigue. When working memory is overwhelmed by decoding efforts, the space for formulating responses becomes limited. This explains the emergence of long pauses and fragmented speech. Meanwhile, a metacognitive perspective on guided listening (Rahman et al., 2021) suggests that self-monitoring and self-regulation skills contribute to effective comprehension. Sixth-semester students who are able to tolerate ambiguity and use inference demonstrate more mature metacognitive control. A communicative approach is also relevant, as integrating listening and speaking in meaningful contexts accelerates the formation of connections between input and output. In other words, fluency develops when language is not only understood but also used in authentic interactions.

When put together, these findings suggest that the cognitive dimension of listening serves as a bridge between language input and output. Exposure to meaningful input enriches mental representations of language. Processing efficiency reduces working memory load. A sense of competence strengthens readiness to speak. All three form a mutually supportive system. Fluency can be understood as the result of the integration of three layers of processes: efficient linguistic processing, stable metacognitive regulation, and self-confidence built through successful experiences. The theoretical contribution of this research lies in confirming that the cognitive dimension of listening plays a central role in developing fluency. Fluency is not merely the result of production practice, but rather a manifestation of mental readiness formed through efficient auditory comprehension.

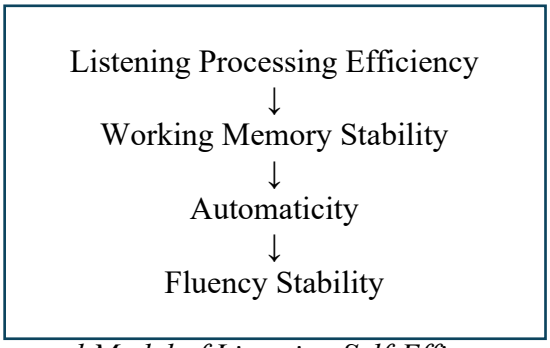

Figure 2. Conceptual Model of Listening Self-Efficacy and Oral Fluency Development

This model expands the conventional perspective that tends to place speaking at the center of fluency development. In this context, listening is positioned as the cognitive foundation that determines the quality of output. This research not only confirms the relevance of existing theories but also offers a new synthesis that fluency in EFL students is cognitively mediated through listening experience. This approach opens up space for the development of learning models that emphasize strengthening input processing as a long-term strategy for building authentic and sustainable fluency.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study revealed a clear distinction between fourth- and sixth-semester students in how they interpreted and processed listening activities, and how these differences shaped their oral fluency. Fourth-semester students tended to experience listening as a demanding and stressful task that required concentrated effort. Their approach was characterized by word-for-word comprehension and frequent reliance on mental translation, which often led to pauses, repetitions, and hesitations when speaking. In contrast, sixth-semester students demonstrated a more advanced processing pattern, focusing less on individual words and more on grasping the main ideas and overall flow of discourse. This shift allowed them to respond more calmly, with greater confidence, and with improved fluency. Observations and documentation of speaking practice corroborated these findings, showing that students with greater exposure to authentic listening materials exhibited more stable speech rhythms, continuity of expression, and stronger confidence in oral communication. These findings highlight the importance of listening development as a foundation for oral fluency in higher education language learning.

Despite these valuable insights, several limitations of the study must be acknowledged. The research was conducted within a single institutional context, focusing exclusively on English Language Education students at Universitas Klabat, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other universities or cultural settings. The purposive sampling of only two cohorts—fourth- and sixth-semester students provided useful contrasts but did not capture the full range of learners across different proficiency levels or academic disciplines. Furthermore, the study relied primarily on qualitative data, which, while rich in depth, did not include quantitative measures of listening self-efficacy or oral fluency that could statistically validate the observed patterns. Researcher interpretation during coding and thematic analysis also posed a potential source of bias, despite efforts to ensure reliability through inter-coder agreement and triangulation. Finally, the study concentrated on listening and speaking skills, without examining how other language skills such as reading and writing may interact with self-efficacy and fluency development.

Building on these limitations, future research should broaden the scope to include diverse institutional contexts and larger participant samples, thereby enhancing the generalizability of findings. Employing mixed methods designs that combine qualitative insights with quantitative measures of listening self-efficacy and oral fluency would allow for more robust conclusions. Longitudinal studies could also provide valuable perspectives by tracking changes in listening self-efficacy and fluency development over time, offering a clearer picture of how these skills evolve across different stages of language learning. Additionally, future research could investigate the integration of listening self-efficacy with other dimensions of communicative competence, such as pragmatic awareness or intercultural communication, to better understand the holistic development of language

proficiency. Intervention-based studies that implement targeted listening training or self-efficacy enhancement strategies would also be beneficial, as they could yield practical recommendations for curriculum design and pedagogy. Such efforts would help educators foster both listening confidence and oral fluency, ultimately supporting students' communicative competence in higher education contexts.

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