

**CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS IN ACADEMIC LISTENING: A  
FOCUS ON CONVERSATION VIDEOS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
EDUCATION STUDENTS**

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**Abstract**

This study investigated the primary linguistic, cognitive, and affective challenges English Language Education (ELE) students face when using conversational videos for academic listening and explored practical pedagogical interventions to mitigate these issues. A qualitative case study was conducted with a purposive sample of three ELE students from the Islamic University of Kalimantan. Data were collected via semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed students struggle with the fast pace, accents, idioms, and slang of natural speech. Cognitively, they experience overload and find it difficult to distinguish key information from fillers. Affectively, this leads to anxiety and disengagement. Students proposed several solutions, including: pre-listening activities (mind maps, vocabulary lists, and summaries), interactive tools (accurate transcripts), and learner-centered approaches (content personalization and progress visualization). The study concludes that combining these strategies can transform challenging conversational videos into effective tools for academic listening.

**Keywords:** Academic Listening, Conversation Videos, ELE Students, Challenges, Solutions

**A. INTRODUCTION**

Listening is a fundamental but demanding skill for English learners, especially in academic settings (Ramadhianti & Somba, 2022; Andayani et al., 2024). Unlike conversational talk, academic listening often requires learners to

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process dense, fast-paced lectures or presentations, with little opportunity for interaction (Ramadhianti & Somba, 2022). Learners' internal constraints—such as limited vocabulary knowledge and insufficient listening strategies—and external factors like varied accents and rapid speech rate further exacerbate comprehension difficulties (Ramadhianti & Somba, 2022; Maharani, 2024). These barriers can lead to comprehension failures and heighten anxiety in academic listening contexts.

To mediate these issues, authentic listening materials (videos, podcasts, conversational speech) are increasingly adopted in pedagogy to approximate real-world language use (Andayani et al., 2024; Wulandari et al., 2025). For example, a study by Andayani et al. (2024) on podcast use found that learners appreciated exposure to natural speech and multiple accents in improving listening fluency. The use of audiovisual media also offers visual and contextual cues (lip movement, gestures, situational context), which can scaffold comprehension and help retention (Andayani et al., 2024). However, their unscripted, colloquial nature and high speech rate can overwhelm learners accustomed to textbook dialogues (Ramadhianti & Somba, 2022; Andayani et al., 2024).

While the advantages of using podcasts, videos, and other authentic audiovisual media in listening instruction are increasingly documented (Andayani et al., 2024; Wulandari et al., 2025), there remains a gap: few studies hone in on the specific challenges of academic listening via conversational video and systematically propose pedagogical remedies. This study aims to fill that gap by investigating the particular difficulties faced by English learners using conversational video for academic listening, and then proposing an evidence-based intervention framework.

## **B. METHODOLOGY**

This study uses a qualitative case study approach to provide an in-depth understanding of academic listening challenges and solutions. Case study methodology is well suited for exploring real-world phenomena in context and focusing on subjective experiences of a small group rather than aiming for broad generalizability (Mtisi, 2022). The case study method allows detailed investigation

within its specific context, enabling collection of rich, descriptive data about participants' perceptions, strategies, and challenges.

#### Participants

The study will include a purposive sample of three English Language Education (ELE) students from the Islamic University of Kalimantan Muhammad Arsyad Al-Banjari. Purposive sampling is chosen to ensure that participants meet specific criteria relevant to the research questions, such as having prior academic listening experience and engaging with conversational videos (Purposive sampling: complex or simple?, 2020). A small number of participants ( $n = 3$ ) is acceptable in case study work when the aim is depth of insight rather than breadth (Mtisi, 2022). The identities of participants will be kept confidential, using pseudonyms to protect privacy and comply with ethical requirements.

#### Technique of Data Collection

Data will be collected using individual semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews allow flexibility: a planned set of open-ended questions plus room to probe for deeper responses based on participants' answers (Panyasai & Ambele, 2025). The interview guide will cover areas such as challenges (e.g., speed, accent, vocabulary), strategies currently used, potential solutions (e.g., subtitles, transcripts, repeated listening), and perceptions of effectiveness of conversational videos for academic listening. Interviews will be audio-recorded with consent, and each will last approximately 45-60 minutes.

#### Data Analysis

Transcribed interview data will be analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis, following the phases of (1) familiarization, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) writing up, as per Braun & Clarke's guidelines for quality and rigor (Braun & Clarke, 2024). This method allows patterns and themes to emerge from the data while preserving researcher reflexivity and transparency.

#### Research Procedure

The research will proceed in defined steps: obtaining ethical approval; recruiting participants; conducting audio-recorded semi-structured interviews; transcribing verbatim; analyzing via the six-phase reflexive thematic analysis; and finally synthesizing findings into a coherent report with participant quotes in support. Throughout, ethical considerations such as confidentiality, voluntary participation, and informed consent will be upheld.

## **C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. The Primary Challenges ELE Students Face when Using Conversational Videos for Academic Listening**

To explore the primary linguistic, cognitive, and affective challenges ELE students face when using conversational videos for academic listening, five questions were prepared as follow:

- a. When you watch conversation videos for academic purposes, what specific language features—like speed, accents, or unfamiliar vocabulary—do you find most difficult to understand, and can you give a recent example?
- b. How do you try to identify the main ideas or key arguments in a conversation video, and what thought processes or skills do you feel are lacking when the conversation is unstructured and fast-paced?
- c. What are your feelings—such as anxiety, frustration, or a lack of motivation—when you encounter a conversation video that is very difficult, and how do these feelings affect your ability to keep listening and learning?
- d. When you face a major challenge in a conversation video, what specific strategies or tools (e.g., subtitles, pausing, re-watching) do you use to try and overcome it, and how effective do you find them?
- e. From your experience, what do you believe is the single most important thing that could be done to make conversation videos more effective tools for your academic listening development?

#### **Interview Responses from "FAZ"**

- a. *"I struggle most with fast, natural speech and different accents. Just last week, I watched an interview with an Irish musician, and I couldn't understand half of what he said because of his accent and speed."*

- b. *"I try to catch keywords, but it's hard to follow the flow of ideas. I feel like my brain can't keep up with the quick back-and-forth, so I often miss the main point."*
- c. *"I feel very frustrated and anxious. When I can't understand something, I start to panic and think, 'I'm not good at this.' It makes me want to just stop listening altogether."*
- d. *"I always turn on the English subtitles. They're a huge help, but sometimes they're not accurate. I also have to pause and re-watch a lot, which is effective but can be time-consuming."*
- e. *"I think the most important thing is to have videos with transcripts that are 100% accurate. This would allow me to go back and check what I missed, making the learning process much smoother."*

FAZ struggles with academic listening from conversation videos, particularly due to fast, natural speech and accents. Cognitively, they can't process information quickly enough, leading to cognitive overload and missed main points. This strain triggers an affective response of frustration and anxiety, which ultimately undermines motivation and causes disengagement.

FAZ copes by using subtitles, pausing, and re-watching, but recognizes these strategies are often inefficient. Their main suggested solution is 100% accurate transcripts. FAZ believes this text-based support would serve as an effective scaffold to improve comprehension and boost confidence.

#### Interview Responses from "TSK"

- a. *"I find idioms and slang very difficult. In a talk show video, the host said, 'He hit the nail on the head.' I didn't know what it meant, so I missed the point."*
- b. *I focus on keywords, but it's hard when topics change quickly. I feel I lack the skill to summarize and organize the information in my head fast enough, especially with multiple speakers.*
- c. *I feel really overwhelmed and discouraged. It makes me doubt my English ability and I often give up on the video. My confidence drops and I don't want to try again.*

- d. *I always use subtitles, but sometimes they are not accurate. I also re-watch difficult parts several times. It helps but it takes too much time and it's not a very efficient way to learn.*
- e. *The most important thing would be for teachers to provide a summary or outline of the video content beforehand. Knowing what to expect would reduce my anxiety."*

TSK faces several challenges with conversational videos, primarily struggling with idioms and slang, which are common in authentic, unscripted content. This linguistic barrier disrupts their understanding, as seen in their failure to comprehend the phrase, "hit the nail on the head."

Cognitively, TSK struggles with rapid topic shifts and multiple speakers, indicating a deficit in real-time information processing. This inability to mentally summarize the content leads to comprehension breakdowns. These linguistic and cognitive difficulties have a significant affective impact, causing TSK to feel overwhelmed, lose confidence, and give up.

TSK currently copes using time-consuming and inefficient strategies like subtitles and re-watching. Their key suggestion for improvement is for teachers to provide a pre-listening summary or outline. This pedagogical intervention would offer much-needed context, reducing anxiety and making the listening task more manageable and effective.

#### Interview Responses from "TD"

- a. *"I struggle with the pronunciation of words and connected speech. For example, in a news video, the phrase "out of" sounded like "outta," which I didn't recognize until I looked at the subtitles.*
- b. *I focus on the keywords and the visuals to get the main idea. But I feel I lack the skill to organize my notes and separate important details from conversational fillers when people speak informally.*
- c. *I get really stressed when I can't understand. I worry that I'm falling behind, and it makes me feel helpless. This feeling often causes me to lose focus and just zone out.*

- d. I always slow down the playback speed to 0.75x. This is a very effective tool for me, but it doesn't solve the vocabulary problem. Sometimes I also re-watch parts with subtitles on.*
- e. The most important thing would be for teachers to provide pre-listening vocabulary lists. This would make it easier to understand the content and reduce the time I spend looking up words.”*

TD's main linguistic challenge is processing the pronunciation of words and connected speech. Their confusion over "out of" becoming "outta" highlights a gap between their knowledge of formal, written English and the phonetics of natural, spoken English.

Cognitively, TD can identify keywords and use visuals, but struggles with note-taking and distinguishing important information from conversational fillers. This suggests a difficulty with the mental organization required for effective academic listening. The affective impact is significant, as TD reports feeling stressed and helpless, leading to a loss of focus and disengagement.

TD copes by slowing down the video's playback speed, but notes this doesn't solve all issues like vocabulary gaps. TD's preferred solution is a teacher-provided pre-listening vocabulary list. This proactive scaffold would reduce look-up time, making the listening task more manageable and less anxiety-inducing.

From a theoretical standpoint, FAZ's difficulties can be interpreted in light of Processability Theory (PT), which construes that learners process linguistic structures in a relatively fixed developmental sequence and may struggle when confronted with more complex or faster structures. Her breakdown with rapid, unscripted dialogue suggests a processing bottleneck: her cognitive processing capacity is exceeded by the demands of spontaneous speech, leading to failures in comprehension rather than gaps in linguistic knowledge. This interpretation aligns with empirical findings on the role of processing speed and automaticity in L2 listening performance (Hui & Godfroid, 2020).

Their reliance on subtitles and transcripts — and the frustration experienced when they are inaccurate — is consistent with sociocultural and scaffolding perspectives. In this view, a well-designed transcript or subtitle serves as a scaffold

within the learner's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), lowering cognitive load and freeing attention for higher-level meaning processing. Emotional reactions (such as anxiety or disengagement) when learners face tasks beyond their ZPD are also consistent with sociocultural accounts of scaffold withdrawal and learner frustration (Pais Mardena & Herrington, 2024).

TSK's difficulties illustrate how linguistic, cognitive, and affective factors intertwine in L2 listening, especially with authentic, fast-paced content. His struggle with idiomatic or colloquial language underscores that comprehension entails not only decoding but integration with lexical knowledge and world knowledge. Rapid topic shifts and multiple speakers likely overload working memory and attentional control, hindering the construction of coherent mental models, and pushing processing demands beyond capacity may evoke negative affect (e.g. frustration, loss of confidence).

TD's challenges highlight how misalignment between low-level phonological decoding and higher-level discourse integration impedes listening comprehension. Difficulty decoding connected speech (e.g. reductions, elision) can cascade upward, undermining meaning construction. Attempting to take notes while processing spontaneous speech further taxes working memory and organizational processes. Their compensatory strategies — such as keyword selection, use of visuals, slowing playback speed, and pre-listening vocabulary activation — function as scaffolds to reduce cognitive load and buffer against negative emotional reactions.

## **2. Specific Pedagogical Interventions and Learning Strategies that Can Be Effectively Implemented to Mitigate These Challenges**

To explore specific pedagogical interventions and learning strategies that can be effectively implemented to mitigate these challenges, five questions were prepared as follow:

- a. How do you think teachers could better prepare you before you watch a difficult conversation video? What kind of pre-listening activities—like vocabulary pre-teaching or discussing the topic—do you believe would be most helpful?

- b. When you are watching a video, what features or tools do you wish were available to help you understand in real time? Could you discuss your experiences with using subtitles or transcripts and how they could be better integrated into your learning process?
- c. After watching a conversation video, what kind of follow-up activities—such as summarizing, discussion, or a quick quiz—do you think would help you remember and apply what you've learned more effectively?
- d. If a teacher were to teach you specific learning strategies, like note-taking or listening for "gist," how confident do you feel that you could apply them to conversation videos? What would motivate you to keep practicing with these difficult videos?
- e. Imagine the ideal English listening class. How would conversation videos be used in that class to help you, and what would the teacher's role be in using them effectively?

#### Interview Responses from "FAZ"

- a. *"I think vocabulary pre-teaching is the most helpful. If I know the keywords beforehand, I feel more confident and don't get stuck on every unfamiliar word while listening."*
- b. *"I wish I had a tool that highlights new words on the screen as they are spoken. I use subtitles, but they can be distracting. Having a glossary pop-up would be great."*
- c. *"Summarizing what I heard and then discussing it with a partner would be great. It would help me confirm my understanding and use the new language right away."*
- d. *"I'm not very confident, but I'd try. What would motivate me is seeing my progress, maybe through a simple chart. And if the videos were on topics I genuinely care about."*
- e. *"The teacher would use videos on varied topics. They'd explain key concepts and vocabulary first, then we'd watch. Afterwards, we'd do a quick discussion, with the teacher guiding us."*

FAZ's feedback highlights several key areas for improving academic listening with conversation videos. Her primary challenge is vocabulary comprehension; she gets "stuck on every unfamiliar word," which hurts her confidence. While she uses subtitles to cope, she finds them distracting and wants more targeted, less intrusive support.

FAZ's suggestions focus on proactive scaffolding. They believe vocabulary pre-teaching is the most helpful strategy, as it boosts confidence and prevents comprehension breakdowns. This extends to a proposed technological solution: a tool that highlights new words on screen with a pop-up glossary, which they feel would be less distracting than full subtitles.

FAZ's responses show a strong link between her learning experience and her affective state. She lacks confidence and feels that motivation is key. To improve this, she suggests two main ideas: content personalization, by using videos on topics she cares about, and progress visualization, through a simple chart to see her improvement.

FAZ envisions a structured learning process where the teacher acts as a central guide. This process would involve pre-listening activities (explaining concepts and vocabulary), followed by a guided watching phase. A final post-listening discussion would help confirm understanding and practice new language. The suggestion to "discuss what I heard with a partner" highlights a desire for interactive learning to solidify knowledge.

#### Interview Responses from "TSK"

- a. *"I believe discussing the topic first would be most helpful. This activates our background knowledge and gives me a general idea of the content, reducing the feeling of being lost."*
- b. *"I wish there were interactive transcripts that I could click on to get a quick definition. Subtitles are good, but they can be too fast to read and process at the same time."*
- c. *"Summarizing in small groups and then presenting to the class. It helps me organize my thoughts and gives me a chance to use the new vocabulary, which makes it stick better."*

- d. *"I think I would be moderately confident. I would be motivated by seeing a clear link between the video and my own learning goals, maybe with a progress checklist."*
- e. *"The teacher would use videos in small, manageable chunks. Their role would be to act as a guide, providing context, explaining difficult parts, and leading discussions afterward."*

TSK identifies several challenges and suggests strategies to improve academic listening with conversation videos. Their primary challenge is feeling "lost" due to a lack of context. TSK's main solution is to discuss the topic first, a proactive strategy that activates background knowledge and provides a mental framework, making the content more accessible.

TSK finds traditional subtitles too fast to process. They propose an interactive transcript as a more effective tool, allowing them to click on words for quick definitions. This highlights the need for a resource that provides self-paced, on-demand vocabulary support.

TSK's responses reveal a link between their confidence and clear learning objectives. They would be motivated by a "clear link" between video content and their personal learning goals, perhaps using a progress checklist. This highlights the importance of learner autonomy and goal-oriented instruction.

TSK envisions a teacher as a guide who facilitates learning by using videos in "small, manageable chunks." The proposed process involves pre-listening activities for context, guided listening to explain difficult parts, and post-listening activities like discussions. TSK's suggestion to summarize in small groups and present to the class highlights a desire for collaborative learning and vocabulary practice.

#### Interview Responses from "TD"

- a. *"I think a topic-specific mind map from the teacher would be perfect. It would show the main concepts and their connections before I start, so I'm not just lost in the language."*

2. *"I wish I could click on a word in the transcript to pause the video and see a definition or example sentence. Subtitles are helpful, but this would be more interactive and effective."*
3. *"A short, guided discussion in pairs to share what we understood. This would help me check if my comprehension is correct and allow me to practice speaking what I heard."*
4. *"I'm not very confident, but I'd be willing to try. I'd be motivated by seeing a progress report showing how my speed and comprehension are improving over time."*
5. *"The teacher would use short video clips, not a full 20-minute video. Their role would be to introduce the context and the key vocabulary first, then guide us with some questions."*

TD describes challenges and suggests solutions for academic listening. Their main difficulty is feeling "lost" from a lack of structure. While they use subtitles to cope, they desire a more active, interactive form of support to help them mentally organize information.

TD's suggestions focus on providing a clear framework and interactive tools. They propose a teacher-provided mind map to visually outline key concepts and their connections, which would serve as a roadmap for the listening task.

TD also suggests a technological enhancement: an interactive transcript where clicking a word pauses the video and provides a definition or example. This would allow for self-directed vocabulary acquisition in real-time.

TD indicates a lack of confidence but a willingness to try. Their motivation is linked to tangible evidence of improvement. They suggest that a progress report that tracks their speed and comprehension would be a key motivator, as it would provide a clear measure of their learning progress over time.

TD envisions a structured learning process where the teacher acts as a guide. They propose using short video clips to make tasks more manageable, with pre-listening activities to introduce context and vocabulary. This would be followed by guided questions during the video and a final post-listening discussion in pairs to

check comprehension and practice speaking. This highlights their desire for a scaffolded, collaborative, and interactive learning environment.

FAZ's listening challenges stem from a complex blend of linguistic, cognitive, and affective factors. From a theoretical vantage, her struggle with unknown vocabulary corresponds with models of L2 listening that emphasize metacognitive control (planning, monitoring, evaluating), where failures in these processes disrupt meaning construction and trigger cognitive overload, leading to affective consequences such as reduced confidence (In'nami et al., 2023). Her expressed desire for pre-teaching and a pop-up glossary can be viewed as a call for proactive scaffolding — providing linguistic support in advance to reduce processing demand — a principle aligned with recent developments in scaffolding in digital learning environments (Liu et al., 2024). The proposed solutions — content personalization and progress tracking — also reflect current views on learner motivation that emphasize autonomy, relevance, and visible feedback as key motivators.

For TSK, his listening comprehension difficulties appear to go beyond low-level decoding, implicating deficits in top-down processing and weaker regulation of listening strategies. According to metacognitive listening frameworks, successful listeners anticipate discourse structure, activate background schemata, and monitor comprehension (e.g. Vandergrift & Goh, 2023; In'nami et al., 2023). Thus, a pre-listening discussion can act as a schema-based scaffold to reduce cognitive load. His frustration with subtitle speed and preference for interactive transcripts is consistent with findings that skilled listeners monitor comprehension dynamically and use strategy repair tools (Zhang & Yang, 2023). The interactive transcript serves as a self-monitoring scaffold to reduce breakdowns and lexical gaps. His preference for chunked video segments and scaffolded discussion further underscores a learner need for incremental scaffolding and regulated exposure to complexity.

In TD's case, the challenges suggest mismatches between phonological decoding and discourse integration. Difficulty processing connected speech (e.g. reductions, elisions) points to strain at the decoding level, undermining subsequent

top-down processing. The preference for mind maps and interactive transcripts suggests scaffolding to structure discourse and manage lexical interruptions. From a meta-cognitive perspective, these scaffolds allow the listener to allocate cognitive resources more effectively, reducing overload and mitigating affective stress. TD's preference for feedback, progress metrics, chunked segments, and guided discussion likewise signals a need for a scaffolded learning environment in which the instructor supports the learner's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) toward gradual mastery.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

This study investigated the primary linguistic, cognitive, and affective challenges faced by ELE students when using conversational videos for academic listening, and it proposed a framework of practical, evidence-based solutions. The findings confirmed that students struggle with unstructured speech (e.g., fast pace, idioms, and connected speech) and cognitive overload, leading to feelings of anxiety and frustration. This research filled a gap in the literature by directly linking these specific difficulties to the nature of authentic video content.

The findings have significant implications for pedagogy. The solutions proposed by the students—such as pre-listening activities (mind maps, vocabulary lists, and summaries), interactive tools (accurate transcripts and click-to-define glossaries), and learner-centered approaches (progress tracking and personalized content)—are not merely coping mechanisms. They are essential scaffolds that align with key theoretical frameworks, including socio-cultural theory and models of meta-cognitive awareness.

Future research could build on these findings by developing and testing a prototype of an interactive video player that incorporates the students' suggested features. Additionally, a quantitative study could measure the impact of these specific pedagogical interventions on student comprehension, anxiety levels, and motivation. Such research would further validate the importance of these practical strategies for enhancing academic listening skills and preparing students for real-world communication.

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