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Listening Journals to Promote Students' Critical Thinking Skills in an Integrated Listening-Speaking Course

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Abstract

This study aims to explore whether there is a significant improvement in students' critical thinking (CT) skills after implementing listening journals as one of the tasks in the Critical Listening and Speaking II course. This study also reports students' responses to the implementation of listening journals. In this mixed-method study, students' CT skill was measured using a Critical Thinking Self-Assessment (CTSA) Scale prior to and subsequent to the listening journal implementation period. Meanwhile, a reflective questionnaire with open-ended questions was employed to reveal students' responses to the implementation of the listening journals' tasks. Fifty students studying in the fourth semester of an English education department in a private university in Indonesia participated in this study. A paired-samples t-test result suggested a significant improvement in students' scores from the pre- to the post- CT self-assessment ($t = -4.136$, $p < .05$). In addition, the qualitative data obtained from the reflective questionnaire showed that the dominant responses from the students were positive towards the listening journal task. The findings of this study suggest that listening journals can be an effective strategy to help foster learners' critical thinking while developing listening and other skills. Even so, some felt the process was too monotonous and difficult. Thus, suggestions for future research are offered to improve the journal's future design and implementations.

Keywords: Critical thinking, Critical Thinking Self-Assessment (CTSA) Scale, listening journals, listening skill.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the EFL classroom, listening is an essential skill since it is the most used skill in daily communication and enables learners to receive language input (Etemadfar et al., 2020). Therefore, listening plays an essential role in helping learners interact with language input and facilitating the emergence of other language skills (Etemadfar et al., 2020; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). At the same time, listening is often perceived as the most difficult (Chen, 2017) and complex skill (Bidabadi & Yamat, 2014) since it requires listeners to receive sounds and interpret meaning at the same time the aural text is given.

Listening, despite its complexity, has received the least attention (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). When compared to the other language skills, it is said to be the least understood and least researched (Vandergrift, 2008). It emphasizes the importance of listening as a skill that must be studied for its development, particularly in teaching students how to listen more effectively. One of the ways to teach effective listening is through the metacognitive approach (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012), which enables learners to take control and reflect on their learning (Chen, 2017).

Metacognition and critical thinking (hereafter, CT) are inseparable concepts (Mbato, 2019). Both of them address the ability to take responsibility for one's thinking, using this thinking to make decisions and analyze information, and evaluate and assess learning (Uzuntiryaki-Kondakçi & Çapa-Aydin, 2013). Therefore, CT becomes an essential academic ability that plays an essential role in developing language skills, particularly listening (Aghaei & Rad, 2018; Etemadfar et al., 2020).

Other than listening skills development, there are other reasons behind the urgency of fostering EFL learners' CT skills, particularly in the Indonesian context. According to some research, many Indonesian students still have poor CT ability (Atayeva, 2019). Besides, the correct implementation of CT in Indonesian classroom instructions is still lacking (Mbato, 2019). It might be because the educational approach in Indonesia is still based heavily on memorization rather than the development of higher thinking skills (Indah & Kusuma, 2016; Pertiwi et al., 2021; Samanhudi & Linse, 2019).

As reported by the literature, particularly in the language learning context, having CT is crucial for EFL learners and is believed to support the development of language skills (Harizaj & Hajrulla, 2017; Zarei & Zarandi, 2015), including listening and speaking. One of the ways to foster CT in listening skills is through journaling activities (Aghaei & Rad, 2018; Chen, 2017; Gilliland, 2015). In this study, therefore, a listening journal was implemented as a primary task in the Critical Listening and Speaking 2 (hereafter, CLS 2) for the fourth-semester students of an English education department in a private university in Indonesia to facilitate the development of their listening and speaking skills and CT skills simultaneously. Aside from the aforementioned, there is a scarcity of research on how to use the listening journal to improve CT skills in an integrated listening-speaking class. It becomes the gap that this study intends to fill. With these considerations in mind, the current study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a significant improvement in students' critical thinking skills after the implementation of the listening journal in the CLS 2 course?
2. What are students' responses to the implementation of the listening journal?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Critical Thinking

Critical thinking (CT) is not a new topic (Pasaribu & Iswandari, 2019), yet discussions about it have never ceased among scholars. There are always interesting things to explore from CT, as CT is seen as one of the most important skills in education and real life (Aghaei & Rad, 2018). Besides, CT is one of the 21st century skills (van Laar et.al., 2017) that plays an essential role in one's success in life. In the context of ELT particularly, the integration of CT in EFL classes has been found to help learners improve their communication, expand their vocabulary, and help them to figure out how to use the language for different purposes and contexts (Harizaj & Hajrulla, 2017).

Despite the significance and popularity of CT, there has not been a single nor a clear-cut definition of it (Dummet & Hughes, 2019; Hughes, 2014; Mbato, 2019), although many experts have tried to develop it. Qamar (2016), for example, defined CT as thinking beyond the given knowledge to conclude. Similarly, Cottrell (2005) regarded CT as a cognitive activity involving analytical and evaluative ways of thinking. She also mentions that CT is a complex process of deliberation that involves a wide range of skills and attitudes. Dummet and Hughes (2019) propose a more operational definition of CT. They define CT as “a mindset that involves thinking reflectively (being curious), rationally (thinking analytically), and reasonably (coming to sensible conclusions)” (Dummet & Hughes, 2019, p. 4). These definitions emphasize that CT is a complex and advanced cognitive mechanism that needs to be continuously exercised to develop.

Understanding that CT is not a subject that needs to be taught separately but is a skill that can be included in any educational activity (Pikkert & Foster, 1996); some experts have developed and offered operational frameworks that can be adopted as the basis of classroom CT implementation (Dummet & Hughes, 2019; Hughes, 2014). However, in this research context, Hughes's (2014) framework of CT is employed to design the classroom learning activities to facilitate CT enhancement. Hughes (2014) coined the phrase ‘a stairway of critical thinking’ to refer to the cognitive thinking skills in the Bloom taxonomy (Krathwohl, 2002). This stairway of CT comprises some stages, including understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. These stages are the basis of a practical language course design that will help students develop their CT skills (Hughes, 2014). Hughes (2014) argued that by following the linear steps, educators can design courses that guide students to advance and progress their CT skills from one step to the next.

In the understanding phase, students understand the essential meaning or interpret the meaning of a word, sentence, text, or idea. To check students' understanding, teachers can test students' ability to recall and apply language in a controlled way to demonstrate that they have learned it (Dummet & Hughes, 2019). When students have comprehended a text, they are required to use the information and apply it to some contexts. It is what occurs in the applying phase. Next is the analyzing phase, where students try to question and analyze how certain information or arguments are presented in a text. In other words, students examine the text more critically instead of accepting it at face value (Hughes, 2014).

Going more advanced is the evaluating phase. According to [Hughes \(2014\)](#), in the evaluating phase, students examined the validity and relevance of the information or arguments, for example, by assessing how much of the text is factual and how much reflects the author's opinion. This phase is performed to support students' creations, which occurs in the creating stage. In the creating stage, students apply the new knowledge, facts, and evidence to develop their own opinions or create something of their own ([Hughes, 2014](#)).

2.2 Listening Journals

Listening journals are a book in which students record their listening practices, as well as reflections on their listening experiences ([Schmidt, 2016](#)). [Gilliland \(2015, p. 13\)](#) introduced listening journals as listening logs, defined as "an ongoing assignment through which students document their participation in out-of-class activities and reflect on how such participation helped them improve their listening abilities." The idea of listening journals originated from learning journals that have been used generally in different fields.

In a general definition, learning journals are a tool for reflection that includes not only factual recordings about texts but also learners' evidence of work accompanied by reflective commentaries on them ([Moon, 2006](#)). The activity of writing learning journals is beneficial for students in a way that they can relate between the course material and experiences ([Connor-Greene, 2000](#)), develops creativity and critical reflection ([O'Connell & Dymont, 2007](#)), as well as evaluate concepts and theories more critically ([Bahmani, 2016](#)). Therefore, journal writing has been seen as one of the useful tools to facilitate CT skill enhancement ([Arifin et al., 2020](#); [Moon, 2006](#); [Shaarawy, 2014](#)), particularly in the EFL field.

The activity of writing journals has been adopted in the context of EFL listening classes, as reported in some previous research. One of the most recent research investigating the implementation of listening journals was conducted by [Chen \(2017\)](#). In her research, [Chen \(2017\)](#) utilized listening journals to facilitate students in planning, monitoring, and evaluating their listening activities in relation to developing students' metacognitive awareness. She found evidence that listening journals can help grow students' metacognitive awareness. It is indicated by students' ability to plan for their listening, monitor their comprehension, and evaluate their approach and outcome. Some other research exploring the use of listening journals has also been conducted in Indonesia ([Fauzi & Angkasawati, 2019](#)). Both report the effectiveness of listening journals in improving students' listening skills and comprehension.

Literature has suggested the role of journaling activities, particularly in the listening class context. However, there has not been sufficient empirical evidence on the contribution of listening journals in fostering CT skills, particularly in an integrated listening and speaking class in a higher education context. It, therefore, becomes an important issue that this research tries to explore. Adopting the definitions from [Gilliland \(2015\)](#) and [Schmidt \(2016\)](#), the listening journal used in this study was in the form of learning journals which served as a medium for the students to write what they learned from the listening materials, along with their responses and reflections.

3. METHODS

3.1 Research Design

A mixed-method sequential explanatory study was conducted to gain a complete understanding of whether there is a significant improvement in students' CT skills after the implementation of journal writing activities, as well as students' responses to its implementation. The explanatory sequential design was adopted since it allows the researcher to collect quantitative and qualitative data in two stages, with one type of data gathering preceding and influencing the other (Creswell, 2012). The quantitative data was collected and analyzed first, followed by the qualitative data collection and analysis. In other words, the quantitative phase of the study sought to demonstrate the efficacy of the designed journal in terms of improving students' CT ability. Meanwhile, the qualitative phase helped to understand how the mechanism may have worked or not worked during the intervention (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

The CLS 2 course was a 4-credit course in which the students were assigned to listen to one to two listening passages every week in the form of a podcast or video within the lecturer-given topic. The topics were stories from around the world, the growth mindset, and entrepreneurship. Since this is an integrated listening and speaking course, the listening activities were followed-up with various speaking activities including group discussions, presentations, and individual speeches. This quantitative research phase was conducted in between these listening and speaking activities. It involved assigning the students to write a weekly listening journal as a follow-up activity for listening. In other words, this listening journal was basically a journal writing activity that was listening-based and task-based (Saad & Ahmed, 2015).

The listening journal was designed using the adaptation of Hughes' theory on "the stairway of critical thinking" (Hughes, 2014, p. 3), which comprises understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. The journal takes the following structure:

- 1) Details of the listening text, which include the text title, text type, text duration, and text source.
- 2) Understanding, which requires the students to write a summary of the text.
- 3) Analyzing, which challenges the students to identify the purpose or intent of the text or the speaker(s) in the text.
- 4) Synthesizing, which challenges the students to relate the values from the text to their existing knowledge.
- 5) Evaluating, which directs the students to evaluate what the character(s) have done in the texts/stories, or the validity of the arguments given by the speaker in the text.
- 6) Creating, which requires the students to write a personal reflection on the text and use it to write ideas in response to the same issue addressed in the text. In the creating part, students are also required to write at least one critical question in response to the text.

The assignment of this listening journal aims to provide the students with step-by-step guidance for growing their CT ability according to the stages suggested by Hughes (2014). However, a slight modification was given to adjust the contexts of listening materials. In each journal section, one guideline question was provided to help students write more easily. The questions were as follows:

Table 1. Listening journal guideline questions.

Sections	Questions for fictional texts	Questions for non-fictional texts
Understanding	What is the story mainly telling about?	What is the speaker mainly talking about?
Analyzing	What are the values of the story?	What are the speaker's purposes for discussing the topic?
Synthesizing	How can you relate the values from the story to your life/your surroundings and other things?	How can you relate the values from the text to your life/your surroundings and other things?
Evaluating	What would you do if you were in the character's position? Why?	Are the speaker's arguments based on valid evidence/facts and logical reasoning, rather than only based on his/her assumptions? Provide evidence.
Creating	Write your personal reflections on the story/speech, e.g., how meaningful is it for you?; What different idea(s) do you have in response to the same issue addressed in the story/speech?	

A secondary purpose of this listening journal was to help students prepare for the follow-up speaking activities. In this case, the students would perform the speaking activities based on what they had written in the listening journal. In addition, the critical question that they wrote would be used to guide the class discussion. The students participating in this research were to write fourteen journals within one semester. Seven journals were to be submitted in the mid-semester, and the rest seven journals were to be submitted at the end of the semester. There was no word limit in writing the journals.

3.2 Settings and Participants

This research was conducted in CLS 2, a 4-credit integrated listening and speaking course in the English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) of a private university in Yogyakarta. The cluster sampling method (Ary et al., 2010) was used to select the research participants since it was impossible to select random samples due to the natural classroom settings. The participants were 50 students comprising 8 male and 42 female students. They belonged to two CLS 2 classes taught by the same lecturer using the same approaches. The course was a compulsory course taken by fourth-semester students of ELESP. Of these participants, a number of 20 students participated in interviews; these students were selected based on their availability and consent to be interviewed. They are coded as S1 for Student 1, S2 for Student 2, S3 for Student 3, and so forth, in this paper.

3.3 Research Instruments and Data Collection Techniques

A scale was used to collect data in the pre- and post-implementation of the listening journal to answer the first research question, which was whether or not there was an improvement in students' CT skills following the implementation of the listening journal. The scale of Critical Thinking Self-Assessment (CTSA) was developed with an adaptation from Cottrell (2005) and Mbato (2019). These scales were initially designed to help students self-measure their critical thinking skills in reading. However, the items were modified and adjusted to the context of listening skills. The CTSA scale consisted of 20 items with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from

1 = ‘strongly disagree’ to 5 = ‘strongly agree’. The CTSA scale is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The CTSA scale.

No.	Items
1	I can analyze the speaker’s argument easily.
2	I can figure out facts, experiences, and data that the speaker is using to support her/his conclusions.
3	I can recognize the signals that the speaker uses to indicate his/her argument in a speech.
4	I can find the speaker’s key points easily.
5	I can find key problems discussed by the speaker.
6	I can identify the speaker’s unfair technique used to persuade listeners.
7	I can figure out the main assumptions underlying the speaker’s thinking.
8	I can identify evidence that the speaker gives to support his/her point of view.
9	I pay attention to small details of information when listening.
10	I can weigh up different arguments fairly when listening.
11	I research to find out more about something related to the listening passage to deepen my understanding of a topic.
12	I can spot inconsistencies in a speaker’s argument easily.
13	I can identify unclear arguments given by a speaker.
14	I can evaluate the sources of information that the speaker uses as his/her references.
15	I can identify key conclusions given by the speaker.
16	When a speaker is saying something wrong, I can always spot it.
17	I can rephrase the arguments of others using my own words easily.
18	If I am not sure about what the speaker is saying, I will research to find out more.
19	I can recognize logical fallacies (wrong reasoning).
20	I understand how to structure an argument.

The scale above had been tested for reliability and internal consistency. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient was .863, which suggested that the scale had a very good internal consistency validity (Pallant, 2016). In addition, the inter-item correlation of the scale was .249, indicating that the questionnaire items were correlated well. To answer the second research question on students’ responses to the listening journal task in improving their CT skills, a reflective questionnaire with six open-ended questions was employed to collect qualitative data. This questionnaire was distributed to the students at the end of the semester, subsequent to the submission of the final parts of the listening journal.

3.4 Data Analysis Technique

The quantitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed and interpreted using descriptive statistics. The data were then checked for normality using the normality test in SPSS. Then, a paired-samples t-test was performed to see if there was a statistically significant improvement in terms of students’ CT skills based on the CTSA scale results. As Pallant (2016) stated, the paired-samples t-test is used to see the changes in scores for participants at time one and again at time two, often after some intervention or event. Meanwhile, for the qualitative data, the researcher transcribed the results from the interviews. Following Braun et al. (2016), the transcripts were re-read for familiarization and coded for themes. From here, the themes were developed, refined, and named. Lastly, the findings were reported.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Students' Critical Thinking Skills Improvement

To answer the first research question, a scale of Critical Thinking Self-Assessment (CTSA) was distributed to allow participants self-assess their CT ability before and after the implementation of the listening journal task. Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of students' scores of CTSA pre- and post-implementation of the listening journal task for one semester.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Initial score of CTSA	50	49	88	68.50	8.486
Final score of CTSA	50	42	98	74.20	9.558

Based on the result of the descriptive statistics, an improvement in students' mean scores of the CT score was quite noticeable. After having experienced learning using the listening journal for one semester, the students' CT mean scores increased from 68.5 (SD=8.486) to 74.2 (SD=9.558). However, to prove the significance of the improvement, these results needed to be tested inferentially. To perform this procedure, the data first need to be assessed for normality.

Table 4. Tests of normality.

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Initial score of CTSA	.104	50	.200*
Final score of CTSA	.092	50	.200*

Table 4 shows the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality. It is shown that both the initial score and the final score of students' CT skills were normally distributed as indicated in the non-significant Sig. value ($p > .05$). Therefore, an inferential statistics procedure could be performed to see if the improvement in the students' CT scores was statistically significant. A paired-samples t-test was subsequently conducted and the results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Paired samples test.

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (1-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Initial score of CTSA Final score of CTSA	-5.700	9.744	1.378	-8.469	-2.931	-4.136	49	.000

Based on Table 5, the result of the paired-samples t-test showed a significant improvement of students' CT score from the pre-test (M=68.5, SD=8.486) to the post-test (M=74.2, SD=9.558), with $t(49) = -4.136$ and $p < .05$ (one-tailed).

The quantitative data calculation has confirmed that there is a statistically significant improvement in terms of students' CT scores subsequent to the activities of writing the listening journals for one semester. This finding has proven that the students see the listening journal as an effective tool to build their critical thinking skills. The listening journal sections which comprise understanding, analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating, and creating (Hughes, 2014), as well as the guideline questions provided, seem to have trained the students to examine the aural texts in a more reflective, rational, and analytical way (Dummet & Hughes, 2019).

The result gained from this statistical analysis resonates with Saad and Ahmed's (2015) finding that journal writing as a follow-up of L2 listening tasks could improve the learning quality through the encouragement of critical and analytical thinking. In addition, what this study has found agrees with Arifin et al. (2020) research findings. They reported that regular journal writing activities could help improve students' CT skills, although in varying degrees. After all, even though the quantitative data have shown the effectiveness of listening journals in fostering students' CT skills, further examinations need to be performed to understand better students' responses to the implementation of the listening journal itself.

4.2 Students' Responses to the Implementation of Listening Journal

An open-ended reflective questionnaire was distributed at the end of the term to explore students' responses to the implementation of the listening journals for one semester in the CLS 2 class. Data collected from this questionnaire were used to support the quantitative findings. According to the open-ended questionnaires, the majority of participants gave positive responses to the implementation of the listening journals. Six major themes indicated participants' positive responses and one major theme signified participants' concerns, as explained in the following sections.

4.2.1 Effective facilitation to train CT skill

One benefit obtained by the students participating in this study was that the listening journal could facilitate them in exercising their CT. Some students admitted that they were able to think more deeply about certain issues through analysis and careful examinations of the speakers' arguments. The following statements were quoted from students' questionnaire responses.

- (1) The journal really helps me in interpreting stories and videos from inspiring people. I also learn and think outside the box by digesting videos and stories. (S1)
- (2) This activity sharpens my mind to think critically, for example, thinking is not about understanding only but drawing relationships with any idea and experience to discover something new in life. (S2)
- (3) It helps me learn to improve my critical thinking skills toward the videos/podcast and analyze it deeper based on the aspects from the journal (understand, create, evaluate, etc.). (S3)

Critical thinking is an attribute that includes a number of skills and attitudes (Cottrell, 2005; Dummet & Hughes, 2019). The responses from students shown above clearly indicate several constructs that make up CT ability, namely thinking reasonably and analytically (Dummet & Hughes, 2019) to evaluate arguments, draw conclusions, and present a new point of view (Cottrell, 2005). Through the listening journals, the

students were able to think analytically about the aural texts. Also, they became more capable of discovering relationships between texts to come up with conclusions.

Synthesizing, which is the ability to bring together and relate information from several sources to come to a judgment (Tampubolon & Rajagukguk, 2017), becomes one of the key activities in the journal to train students' CT skills. The synthesizing phase was a substitute for the 'applying' stage in Hughes' stairway of CT since they share similar characteristics. According to Hughes (2014), applying is taking new information from texts and applying it to something. In this listening journal context, the ability to apply information is considered equal to the ability to connect to something or other pieces of information. In connection to this, the qualitative data suggest that students could practice their CT skills through the synthesizing activity, where they were required to relate or find relevant connections among the given text with other information, such as their existing knowledge, personal experiences, or other information obtained from various inputs. This point is reflected in the following students' responses:

- (4) I can analyze more deeply what I hear and can relate what I hear in my life. (S4)
- (5) I think it is helpful for me because it aids me in active listening, how I understand what someone speaks, how to analyze it, draw meaning related to my experience, and take [a] moral message for my life. (S5)
- (6) I also learned how to relate those value[s] in everyday life. (S6)

Concerning the previous point, the students feel that the journal helped them train their CT skills through questioning, which is one part at the end of the journal that requires the students to write a critical question. Questioning is one of the thinking processes since it is a crucial part of knowledge construction (Santoso et al., 2018). Some students stated that the questioning part in the listening journal facilitated them effectively to practice their CT skills as depicted in the following responses:

- (7) ... besides that, it can also make them think critically by asking various questions. (S4)
- (8) I think it is helpful for me because it aids me...on how I can ask [a] question. Someone who has critical thinking is he or she who can raise [a] question. (S5)
- (9) I guess the way how I think because, in the journal, we need to provide some critical question[s]. So, yea, it drives me to need to be able to think critical[ly]. (S7)

4.2.2 Useful journal template

The usefulness of the journal template design emerged as the second theme in students' qualitative responses. According to Hughes (2014), the listening journal consisted of five core sections, as mentioned in the methods section. The five core sections are understanding, analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating, and creating, where each section was provided with a guideline question. The students admitted that they got benefited from this journal structure. Their statements are depicted as follows:

- (10) I think the questions in the 'Listener's response journal' template help me in critical thinking, why? Because starting from the beginning, the question was easy, then it got more and more difficult, and the question persuaded/invited me to think more deeply. (S8)
- (11) The questions are challenging to train critical and logical thinking. (S9)
- (12) Sometimes I have no idea how to dig more deeply into my mind, but the clues provided help me a lot. (S10)

The listening journals designed based on Hughes' 'stairway of thinking' was perceived as an effective tool in developing students' CT since they could take students from one step to the next to stimulate their CT skill gradually (Hughes, 2014).

4.2.3 Improve reflective ability and raise curiosity

One of the indicators of CT skill is the ability to look at issues reflectively (Cottrell, 2005) or think reflectively to raise curiosity (Dummet & Hughes, 2019). In line with this, one of the students' responses was that the listening journal could help them improve their ability to reflect on issues. Besides, they admitted that the journaling activities challenged their curiosity.

- (13) It makes me better understand the content of what I see, and reflect on it in my life. (S4)
- (14) It can hone our critical thinking skills, and also we can do a reflection on the story in our lives. (S11)
- (15) I become a curious person when I got new information. (S9)
- (16) It makes me want to know more about the topic of the video. (S12)

According to Pluck and Johnson (2011), the perceived value of information obtained from 'deep' processing of information increases curiosity to learn more. This finding on students' increased curiosity could indicate that the students' curiosity arose as a result of the deep processing of information that occurred during their reflective practices while writing the journal. Thus, the findings above confirm the linkage between students' reflective abilities and curiosity as suggested by the literature.

4.2.4 Better comprehension of listening materials

Other responses from the student participants suggest that the listening journal was helpful for them in comprehending listening texts. It is because they were required to write a summary in the 'understanding' section, as well as reveal intrinsic elements and make inferences from the texts in the 'analyzing,' 'synthesizing,' and 'evaluating' sections. The following statements depict some students' responses regarding material comprehension.

- (17) It is so much fun and meaningful because sometimes when I watch videos, I only watch them once and forget the content right away. but when I do the weekly listeners' journal assignment from CLS 2 class, I have the ability to remember and fully understand the whole content of the video, so it's really helpful for me! (S13)
- (18) I've learned how to organize my ideas which come from the video or podcast given by the lecturer. And it helped me to save the materials in long-term memory in my brain which is so useful. Because I could remember the material better by doing the journal. (S6)
- (19) I can easily identify the key points/arguments and write them in the journal; this helps me a lot. (S14)

From the excerpts above, it is clear that the students found listening journals beneficial to enhance their comprehension of the aural texts. Similar to this, Fauzi and Angkasawati (2019) found that the practice of listening through listening logs on WhatsApp gives a significant improvement in listening comprehension to EFL learners. Lee and Cha (2020), in another study, reported that using listening logs and classroom lessons helped the students improve their listening proficiency. They also discovered that listening log activities help grow students' metacognitive awareness,

which correlated significantly with students' listening comprehension. These two studies support the current research finding in a way that writing listening journals regularly has helped students not only foster metacognitive skills but also develop better listening comprehension.

4.2.5 Improvement of English competences

According to the responses of the participants, writing listening journals helped them improve their English competencies, including writing and listening skills, as well as vocabulary. The following are excerpts from participants' responses.

- (20) It gives me a lot of how to improve my English. Because in this part I tried to use simple English sentence[s] to relate the value of the story and my experience. (S15)
- (21) I know more new vocabulary. I also write more to complete a given journal assignment. (S16)
- (22) I like the Listeners' Response Journal Activities [be]cause it improves [s] my creativity and writing. (S17)
- (23) It improves my writing and listening skills. (S18)

In this research context, the journal writing was listening task-based, meaning that students were given a topical listening assignment with a follow-up task in the form of writing what they had listened to. This process allowed students to reflect, analyze, and create language content using their own words (Saad & Ahmed, 2015) and writing capability. From the students' responses, the listening journal was seen as a powerful activity to enhance students' writing, listening, and vocabulary in English. Thus, it is apparent that the listening journal contributed positively to not only students' thinking skills but also students' language skills (Harizaj & Hajrulla, 2017; Zarei & Zarandi, 2015).

4.2.6 Foster self-discipline and motivation

The other finding that reflects the benefits of listening journals shows that writing listening journals could foster students' self-discipline and motivation in learning. The excerpts that depict this theme are shown below.

- (24) This routine help[s] us to developing[develop] self-discipline. Also, decreasing our laziness. I'm becoming more diligent. (S19)
- (25) After having Listener's Response Journal, I feel motivated to do something more challenging and newer. (S20)

4.2.7 Students' concerns about the listening journal

Apart from the positive responses, there were also a few concerns coined by the students regarding the listening journal activities. Their biggest concern was related to boredom. The listening journal writing task was to be performed every week. As a consequence, some students admitted that sometimes they felt bored when writing the journal as they considered it a monotonous routine. The second concern was related to the length of the journal, which resulted in the long duration of accomplishing the journal. In line with this, a few students mentioned that the structure of the journal could have been simplified, where some parts could be reduced or merged with other

parts to make it more concise and efficient. The following extracts reflected students' concerns about the listening journal.

- (26) Maybe the parts in the journal can [be] reduced; I think the part synthesize and create are a bit similar, so maybe it can be compiled so that there will not [be] many columns to fill. (S10)
- (27) It needs variations in terms of the journal sequence. (S15)
- (28) ...I suggest making a comparison activity. (S19)

Similar to this finding, [Chen \(2017\)](#) also reported that despite the fact that students recognize the benefits of keeping listening journals in general, they admit that the process was ineffective and time-consuming.

Other than those concerns, a few students stated that they experienced difficulties writing the journal sections. The difficulties mentioned were in terms of using their analytical thinking skills. This concern was reflected in the following extracts:

- (29) Sometimes I'm confused to analyzing the points that connect the video or the podcast to my story life or my experience. (S18)
- (30) It is hard to analyze some parts of the listening journal because the listening material doesn't explain it. (S9)

Having students with different levels of ability in a classroom is a normal occurrence ([Tanjung & Ashadi, 2019](#); [Tomlinson, 2001](#)). Therefore, in the implementation of listening journals, teachers should provide adequate assistance for the students by regularly checking the students and helping them use suitable listening strategies to understand the texts better ([Lee & Cha, 2020](#)). Asking more critical questions may also be effective to activate students to analyze and explore the text more in-depth.

Students' responses revealed that the listening journal brings numerous benefits and values to students' competence. First, the listening journal is an effective tool to improve students' CT skills. Through regular journaling that follows independent listening activities, students become more capable of thinking critically, which is indicated through their ability to evaluate arguments, look at issues reflectively, and ask critical questions. Second, it was also found that students perceived improvements in terms of listening comprehension as well as writing skills and vocabulary acquisition. Other than those, there are some concerns coined by the students regarding the implementation of listening journals, including monotonousness and difficulties in writing the journal entries. Accordingly, in order to deal with students' issues, the role of lecturers must be highlighted. They must play a larger role in students' journal writing processes by providing timely comments and criticism in order to lessen students' challenges ([Iswandari, 2013](#)).

5. CONCLUSION

Through the lens of students' self-assessment of their CT skills, the present study found that the implementation of the listening journal weekly tasks could improve students' CT skills significantly. In other words, the journal writing activity that took place subsequent to listening activities could facilitate students to learn new knowledge in analytical and critical ways. In addition, the listening journal supported the utilization of students' lower-order thinking skills (LOTS) through the stages of

understanding and synthesizing parts since students had to write the summary and values of the listening texts. Students' higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) were also exercised through analyzing, evaluating, and creating stages of the listening journal. This was confirmed in the findings obtained from students' responses to the listening journal implementation. The majority of students' responses indicated that the listening journal was helpful for them not only in fostering their CT skills but also in improving their reflective ability and curiosity, allowing them to have a better comprehension of listening materials, improving English competencies, and fostering self-discipline and motivation.

Based on a few concerns revealed through students' responses, some modifications to the journal template and assignment should definitely be made so that the design of the listening journal task will not be too lengthy and monotonous in the future. After all, lecturers' role needs to be emphasized to cope with students' experiences of difficulties. They need to make more parts to students' journal writing processes by giving timely responses and feedback so that the students' difficulties can be reduced.

One of the study's limitations is that the majority of the listening materials are provided by the teacher. As a result, it is suggested that future listening journal research employ more extensive listening practices. Students' concerns about learning boredom can be alleviated in this manner.

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