



Exploring EFL students' receptive in improving their English productive skills: Existing challenges and expective solutions

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to identify and assess receptive skills in English Language and Literature among English literature students, and to address the challenges they face in developing these skills. This research focuses on the listening and reading skills of students majoring in English Language and Literature. The methodology used includes exploratory data analysis and quantitative analysis. The findings revealed several important points. First, there is diversity in students' proficiency levels in receptive skills, with the majority at the intermediate level. Second, challenges arise from various factors, including limited exposure to English outside the classroom, lack of motivation, and lack of self-confidence. Proposed solutions include the integration of interactive learning methods and the provision of additional listening and reading classes. The researchers concluded that several actions are needed to further develop the receptive skills of English literature students. Effective teaching strategies include the use of authentic materials such as books and films, activities that allow students to actively participate in the language comprehension process, fostering a collaborative learning environment, expanding language support services, utilizing technology-enhanced learning approaches, and improving pedagogical skills.

Keywords:

Receptive Skills; Listening Skills; Reading Skills; EFL; Challenges And Solutions.

A. INTRODUCTION

Existing literature highlights several persistent challenges in the development of receptive skills, including limited motivation, vocabulary-intensive instruction, insufficient resources, and lack of exposure to authentic language use in EFL contexts (Georgieva, 2025). Effective instructional practices such as task-based activities, interviews, and assignments requiring interpretation of spoken or written texts have been shown to enhance receptive skill development (Faizmailatus Sofa et al., 2023). Research further indicates that receptive-skill improvement is influenced by both personal and environmental factors, emphasizing the need for targeted pedagogical support (Gibson et al., 2018). Critical thinking interventions have demonstrated measurable improvements in reading comprehension (Hakim, 2021), while motivation has been identified as a critical component in skill acquisition, supported through independent learning, group work, and perceptual-productive training (Todaka, 2008). More recent studies also point to the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, such as ChatGPT, to provide real-time, low-pressure feedback that supports both receptive and productive learning processes (Irma, 2020).

Overall, prior studies underscore the importance of cognitive, motivational, and instructional factors in strengthening receptive skills. Since listening and reading are central to language acquisition, understanding the challenges experienced by learners is essential for improving instructional practices. In response to this need, the present study aims to examine the receptive skills of English Language and Literature students at UIN Alauddin Makassar, identify the key challenges they encounter, and propose practical, theoretically grounded solutions for

improving these skills.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What is the receptive skills profile of English Language and Literature students at UIN Alauddin Makassar?
2. What challenges do students encounter in developing their receptive skills?
3. What solutions are proposed to enhance receptive skill development?

The significance of this research lies in its potential contribution to improving English Language and Literature education at UIN Alauddin Makassar. By providing empirical insights into students' receptive skill levels and the challenges they face, the findings may inform more effective instructional practices and support decision-making among educators, program designers, and policymakers. These two skills are crucial in the language learning process, as they enable students to comprehend and interpret information presented through both audio and visual media. Reading and listening a lot can help students achieve clear goals (Sreena & Ilankumaran, 2018). Good readers and listeners are able to pick up the topic of a written or spoken text very quickly. With the help of their own schemata, they quickly get an idea of what is being talked about (Skills, 2010). Listening and reading skills known as receptive skills, form the foundation of language learning, particularly in English. By mastering these skills, students can comprehend texts, process the information they receive effectively, and develop their ideas. Relevance: A recent study providing empirical evidence of practical challenges encountered by EFL teachers and students, including issues related to motivation, vocabulary-focused teaching, and lack of resources (Georgieva, 2025).

B. METHODS

In this section, you are asked to describe the method, design, instrument, participant (subject) and location of your research. Please put the procedure of your research clearly, so that it is easy to read. You can describe collecting and analyzing data. Make sure that you employ appropriate research method in line with the research problem and the purpose of your research.

Methods should make readers be able to reproduce the experiment. Provide sufficient detail to allow the work to be reproduced. Methods already published should be indicated by reference: only relevant modifications should be described. Do not repeat the details of established methods. For the chemicals, please provide details of brand and purity (example: CaO (Merck, 99.5%). This research employs exploratory quantitative data analysis. It aims to explore conditions and data, measure students' levels of mastery in receptive skills, and identify existing challenges and potential solutions. The subjects of this research were students of English Language and Literature at UIN Alauddin Makassar. There were 124 respondents, consisting of 67 students from the 7th semester, 54 students from the 5th semester, 2 students from the 3rd semester, and a student from the 11th semester. The instrument of this research is language measurement. The measurement uses a self-administered questionnaire. Statement of the questioner was developed based on the receptive skills theory.

Listening skills, Students need to use their prior knowledge to interpret texts and form reasonable expectations about what they will hear, thereby activating knowledge-based processing. Additionally, they must decode linguistic input quickly and accurately, aligning it with their expectations to ensure consistency and refute implausible interpretations, a process known as text-based processing. It is recognized that listening strategies must be explicitly integrated and addressed pedagogically to improve listening skills (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). According to (Karakas, 2002) Pre-listening activities usually have two main objectives, namely helping to activate students' prior knowledge and building their expectations of the information they will receive, as well as providing the necessary context for a particular listening task. The teacher can then continue with a listening comprehension activity, such as two people talking about their daily lives. Students must be able to answer questions right or wrong based on the listening activity, such as controlled practice activities which can be exercises that exemplify the same structure or vocabulary (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). According to speech perception research, listening comprehension involves more than just decoding sounds. Rivers (1983b) noted three

phases in his discussion of speech perception. First, listeners must recognize that the sounds they hear are not just noise. This recognition indicates that the sounds are part of the language system. In the second phase, listeners group the sounds with their lexical and syntactic properties to identify their form. The third phase involves recoding the auditory message for long-term storage (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011).

Reading Comprehension, Psycholinguistically speaking, reading is not essentially a visual experience, Reading involves two different types of information: (i) visual information, which originates from the written page; and (ii) non-visual information, which originates from the reader's brain (Xiao-ping, 2000). If students frequently engage in reading activities, they will more easily comprehend both explicit and implicit meanings in texts. Additionally, students with high levels of creativity can apply their reading experiences to solve real-life problems (Sari Dewi et al., 2020). Non-verbal information is what the reader already understands about language, reading, and the world at large. Visual information is what can be seen in a book or other type of writing (Smith, 1973). This means that reading sentences aloud is not enough; we also need to have some understanding of the language used to write the content, its subject matter, and reading in general. Reviewing the following four topics is essential when it comes to reading comprehension: (i) the background of reading instruction; (ii) reading types and purposes; (iii) cognitive reading skills; and (iv) comprehension-related variables (Ngabut, 2015).

This aims to obtain profile data of English Language and Literature subjects using a semantic differential scale. Based on Oppenheim (1992) The semantic differential scale, often utilized by researchers to measure social attitudes, particularly in linguistics and social psychology, typically consists of a bipolar scale employing opposing properties. This scale adopts a continuum line format, where the positive end indicates agreement and the negative end indicates disagreement. Respondents utilize this scale to express their perceptions or sentiments towards a concept by selecting points on the scale based on their assessment. Employing a semantic differential scale is often coupled with a questionnaire or interview with respondents to enhance the accuracy of gathered information. This research employs a semantic differential scale consisting of 1-8 scale points. The selection of 1-8 scale points enables clear differentiation in the proficiency levels of students' basic competencies. Scale points 1-4 indicate insufficient mastery of receptive skills, while scale points 5-8 indicate students' mastery of the receptive skills.

Challenges and solutions faced by students in developing their receptive skills using open-ended questions. These questions were given to students as many as 10 questions to see students' responses regarding their receptive skills. 6 questions used a semantic differential scale, and 4 questions used open-ended questions to find out the challenges faced by students in developing their receptive skills and the solutions. The questionnaire's creation has been validated for relevance and clarity by three lecturers in English Language and Literature. Collecting data using Google Form, classifying, summarizing, organizing, analyzing, and interpreting data using Microsoft Excel software to describe the receptive skills of English Literature students at UIN Alauddin Makassar.

C. RESULT & DISCUSSION

1. Listening

There are three items' students should master in listening skills, which are:

1. Being able to assess the rate and accuracy of listening comprehension,
2. Having competence in understanding a wide range of vocabularies they listen to, and
3. Having the competence to notice and differentiate words that are pronounced similarly but spelled differently.

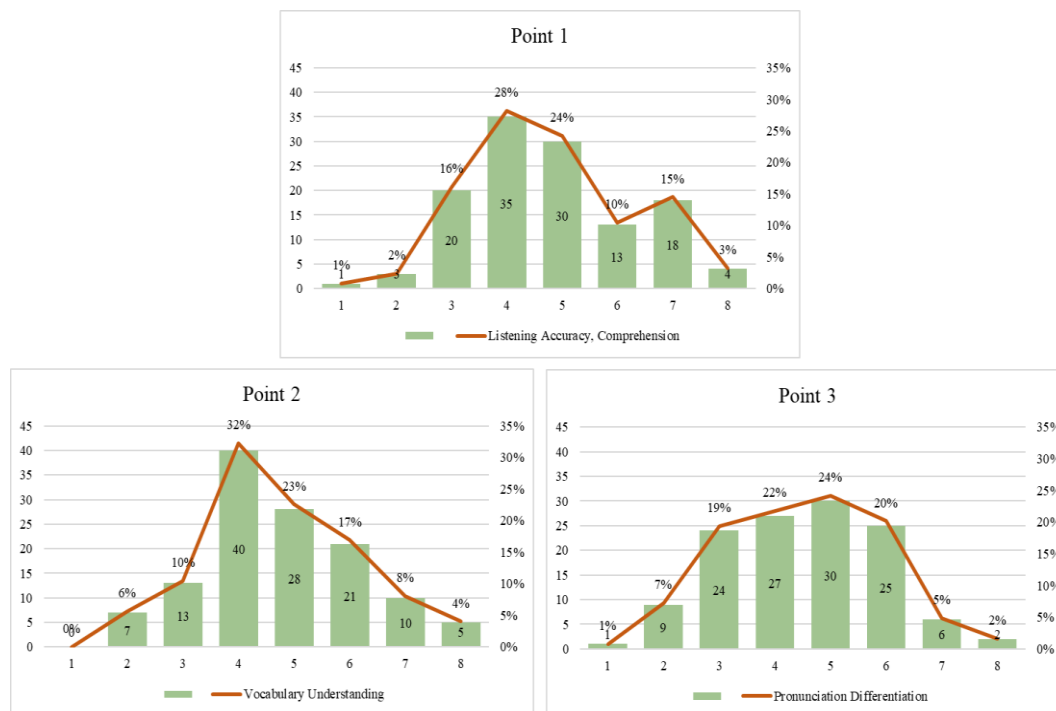
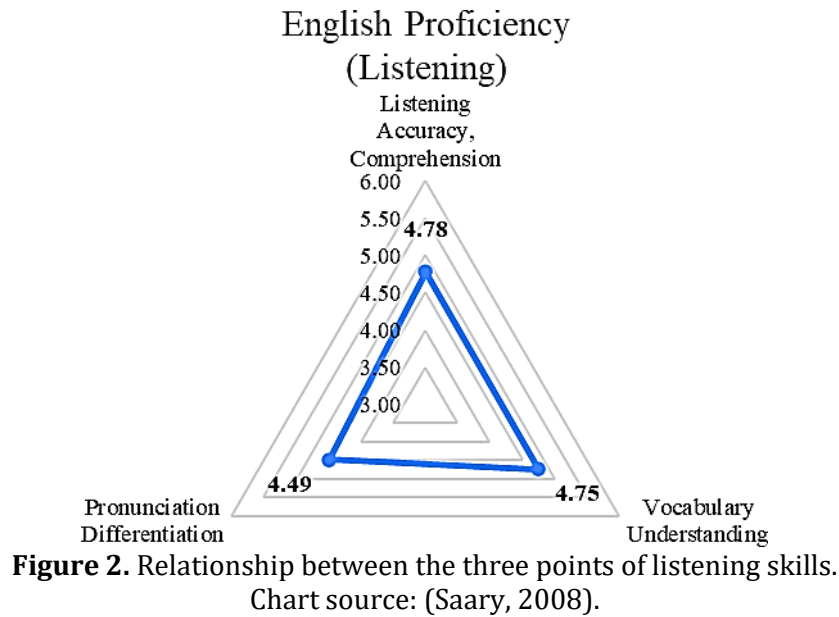


Figure 1. Illustration of students' profile in listening skills.

The bar graph above illustrates the level of students' mastery of basic competencies in English Proficiency (Listening), with students who lack mastery falling within the scale of 1-4, and those who have mastered the basic competence falling within the scale of 5-8. The data is presented as a percentage, depicting the competence to rate and accuracy of listening comprehension. A sample collected from 124 English Language and Literature students at UIN Alauddin Makassar reveals that 59 students (48%) lack mastery in the first competence, which pertains to the ability to rate and accurately comprehend listening material, while 65 students (52%) have mastered this first competence. The second bar graph illustrates the level of competence in understanding a wide range of vocabularies that they listen to. From a sample of 124 students, it is evident that 60 students (48%) scoring in the range of 1-4 lack mastery in understanding much of the vocabularies they listen to, while 64 students (51%) scoring in the range of 5-8 demonstrate mastery in understanding the vocabulary they listen to. The third bar graph depicts students' competence in noticing and differentiating words that are pronounced similarly but have different spellings. From a sample of 124 students, it is shown that 61 students (49%) fall within the range of scale 1-4 and lack mastery in noticing and differentiating such words, while 63 students (51%) fall within the range of scale 5 -8 and have mastery in noticing and differentiating words with similar pronunciations but different spellings. Of the three points above the average student competence being on the scale 5-6. Shows that the majority of English Language and Literature students at UIN Alauddin Makassar most of them have mastered writing competencies, but students who lack mastery of writing competencies also still high. The relationship between student abilities from these three points can also be observed in the following graph.



The initial statement in the graph indicates that students possess sufficient competence in listening skills, with the average competency level for students in terms of the accuracy of listening comprehension rated at scale 4,78. This signifies an ability to comprehend listening tests at easy and medium levels, although difficulties may still arise with more challenging listening tests. The average rating in the second statement mirrors that of the first statement, with students rating their competency at scale 4,75. The accuracy in listening to English is attributed to the understanding of numerous vocabularies heard, aligning with the first statement. As a result, the average student rating in the third statement is at scale 4,49, suggesting that students may encounter some difficulty in discerning and distinguishing words that are pronounced similar but different in spelling. In listening skills make communication last well and effectively, these skills need focus and concentration during communication or explanation to capture information through sound or speech and understand a lot of vocabulary because all languages have different words. Even in one language like in the English language, there are different words in similar pronouncements but different writing. The challenges students face in developing their basic competence in listening skills as non-native English speakers and living in a non-native English environment include a lack of vocabulary, difficulty with pronunciation, unfamiliarity with various English accents, and mastery of only one accent in English. These factors certainly pose inhibiting challenges when students attempt to understand what speakers are saying. Additionally, similar-sounding words can confuse students when interpreting what they hear. Moreover, maintaining concentration presents a challenge for students during listening activities, particularly during listening tests where they must listen to the speaker and capture essential information in one go. If students lose concentration during the test, they risk missing the opportunity to answer questions correctly.

The following responses illustrate the challenges frequently encountered by students in developing this competency. In terms of **vocabulary**, students explained that their main difficulty lies in recognizing words with similar pronunciation but different meanings, which often leads to misunderstandings. Concerning **accent**, some students reported that variations in speakers' accents make it difficult for them to identify what they are listening to. Students also struggled with **similar-sounding words**, noting that they sometimes cannot distinguish between words that sound alike when spoken by native speakers. Another challenge involves **concentration**, as several students admitted that they often lose focus during listening activities. Additionally, students mentioned that certain words are **not clearly articulated**, which further complicates comprehension. Lastly, **motivation** was highlighted as an issue, with one student stating that they feel confused when the teacher speaks in English, affecting their overall understanding.

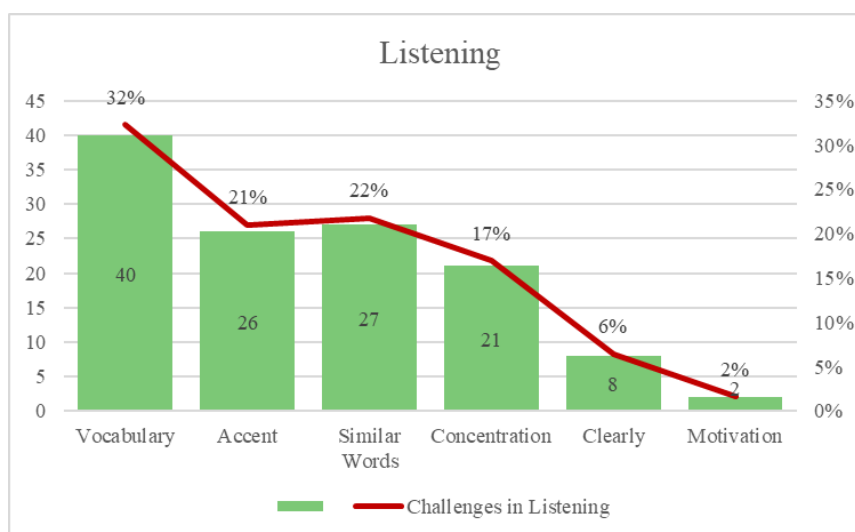


Figure 3. Students' challenges in developing Listening skills

Based on the questionnaire data, it can be concluded that English Language and Literature students at UIN Alauddin Makassar encounter several challenges in developing their listening competencies. These challenges include mastering vocabulary, accents, similar words, concentration, clarity in listening, and motivation. Among these challenges, the most significant ones are vocabulary mastery, which affects 32% of students (40 students), distinguishing similar words, affecting 22% (27 students), and mastering accents, affecting 22% (26 students).

Solutions to facing challenges in developing listening skills include watching English films or television shows with English subtitles. This is helpful for accurately knowing the spelling of each word. Additionally, one can take notes of and translate words that are rarely heard, then memorize them to enhance vocabulary. Listening to English songs is a fun way to improve listening skills. Start by listening to slower-paced songs, such as ballads, as they make it easier to discern words and pronunciation. While listening to songs, reading the lyrics can aid in comprehension. Gradually, try listening to songs with faster beats. Furthermore, inviting friends to always speak in English can help improve both listening and speaking skills.

2. Reading

There are three items' students should master in reading skills, which are:

1. Strong comprehension skills in reading,
2. Understanding the explicit and implied meanings contained in a reading, and

Competence to express opinions and draw conclusions after reading

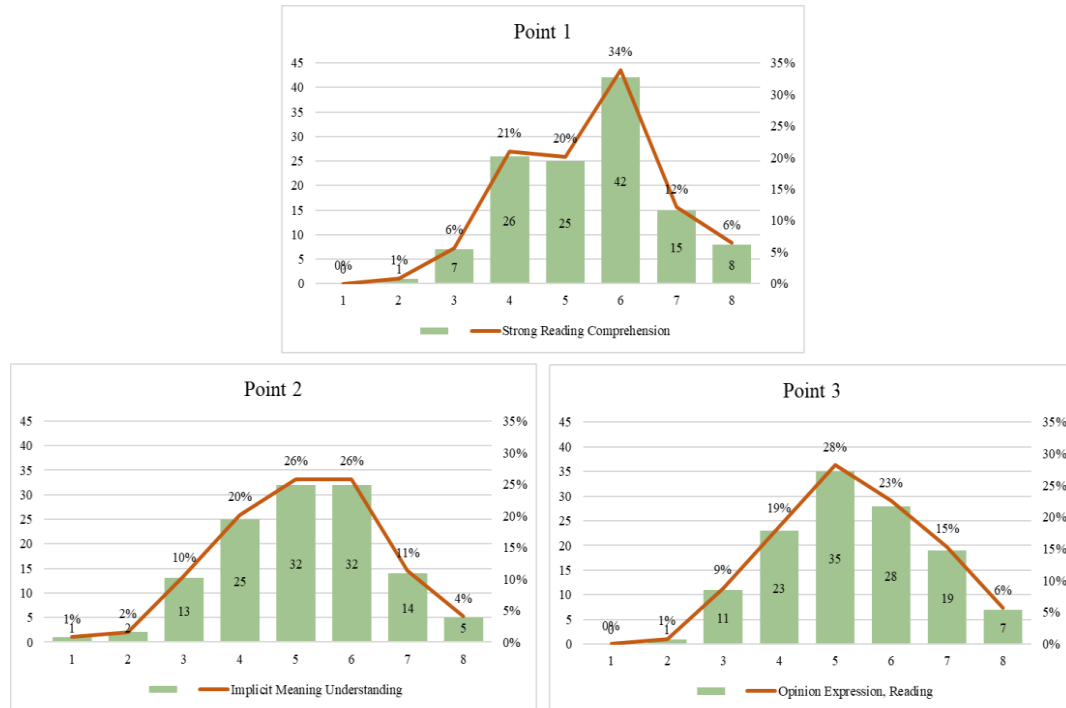


Figure 4. Illustrates the profile of students in Reading skills.

The bar graph above illustrates the level of students' mastery of basic competencies in English proficiency (Reading). Students who lack mastery are categorized on the scale of 1-4, while students who demonstrate mastery of the basic competence are placed on the scale of 5-8. The data is presented as a percentage, indicating a strong comprehension skill in reading. A sample of 124 English Language and Literature students at UIN Alauddin Makassar revealed that 34 students (27%) on a scale of 1-4 lack mastery in the first competence, indicating a deficiency in understanding English texts. Conversely, 90 students (73%) on the scale of 5-8 demonstrated mastery in this first competency, reflecting a strong comprehension skill in reading. The second bar graph illustrates the level of competence in understanding both the explicit and implied meanings contained in a reading. Out of 124 students sampled, it indicates that 41 students (33%) scoring between 1-4 lack mastery in comprehending explicit and implied meanings in a reading, while 83 students (67%) scoring between 5-8 demonstrate mastery in understanding explicit and implied texts in a reading. The third bar graph illustrates students' competence in expressing opinions and drawing conclusions after reading texts. Out of the 124 students sampled, the data revealed that 35 students (28%) scored between 1-4, indicating a lack of mastery in reviewing articles for sentence-level items, while 89 students (72%) scored between 5-8, demonstrating mastery in expressing opinions and drawing conclusions after reading texts. Of the three points mentioned, the average student competence falls within the range of 5-6. This indicates that the majority of English Language and Literature students at UIN Alauddin Makassar possess a strong proficiency in English (Reading), with only a small number lacking mastery. The correlation between student abilities across these three points can also be observed in the subsequent graph.

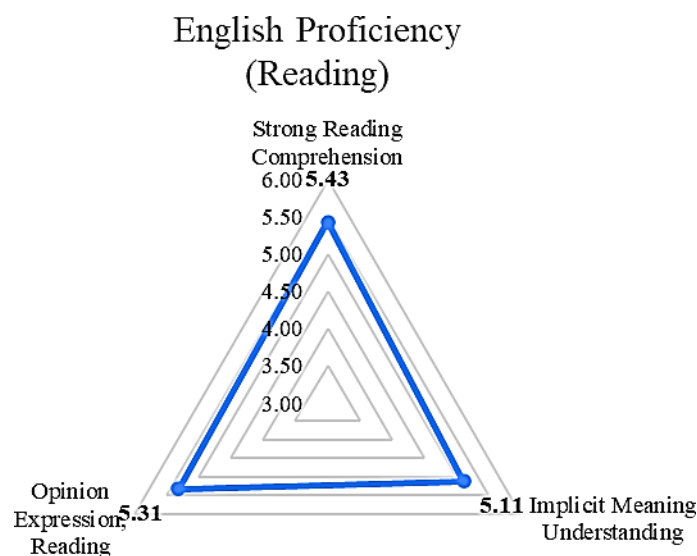


Figure 5. Relationship between the three points of Reading skills.
Chart source: (Saary, 2008).

Visible on the graph, the scale point slightly exceeds the midpoint. Students of English Language and Literature at UIN Alauddin Makassar demonstrate a notably strong comprehension skill in reading, as indicated by the average scale rating of 5,43 on the first statement. They exhibit a professional understanding of both explicit and implied sentences in English text. The graph data reflects that students generally rate their competence at a level of 5,11. Given their understanding, they are able to express opinions and draw conclusions based on the text they read, explaining the average rating of 5,31 on the third statement. Reading skill is an important basic competence in English proficiency. Strong reading comprehension and understanding of text will improve readers' competence, such as vocabulary, grammar, speaking, writing, listening, and understanding explicit and implied sentences in English text. This will develop students' competence, as text naturally involves analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating information from the text, leading to the ability to express opinions and write conclusions. The challenges students face in developing their basic competence in reading skills include difficulty in identifying implied text, particularly due to unfamiliarity with implied sentences from other languages, especially English, as well as boredom with reading text. Additionally, students find it challenging to understand the purpose of the text when translated into Indonesian due to differences in grammatical structure, making it difficult for them to summarize the text.

The following student responses illustrate the various challenges frequently encountered in developing this competency. In terms of **vocabulary**, some students expressed that certain texts contain advanced or high-level vocabulary, making it difficult for them to understand the meaning and maintain coherence from one sentence to another. Regarding **grammar**, students noted that long passages are often difficult to comprehend in a single reading, especially when the topic is unfamiliar, requiring considerable time to fully understand the content. Challenges with **pronunciation** also emerged, as students reported difficulty with new vocabulary whose pronunciation they had never heard before. Some students struggled with **implied meaning**, explaining that they often find it difficult to understand both explicit and implicit meanings within a text. The use of **idioms**, slang, and figurative language in literature also posed challenges, as many students encountered expressions that were unfamiliar or culturally specific. Issues related to **explicit understanding** were also mentioned, with students stating that they lack sufficient reading comprehension skills to grasp explicit and implied meanings and to express opinions or draw conclusions based on the texts they read. In terms of **interest**, students admitted that they easily become bored when reading, which affects their engagement and comprehension. Students also highlighted challenges related to **context**, explaining that the quality of writing significantly affects readability. Poorly structured or directly translated texts make comprehension difficult

due to differences between Indonesian and English writing conventions. Additionally, reading materials outside their field—such as medical texts for literature students—can be difficult due to unfamiliar terminology. With regard to **summarizing**, students reported that they often need to read a text multiple times before they can fully understand it, indicating difficulty in processing and condensing information. Finally, **motivation** was identified as another obstacle, as students shared that encountering difficult vocabulary and reading for extended periods often leads to feelings of laziness or reduced motivation.

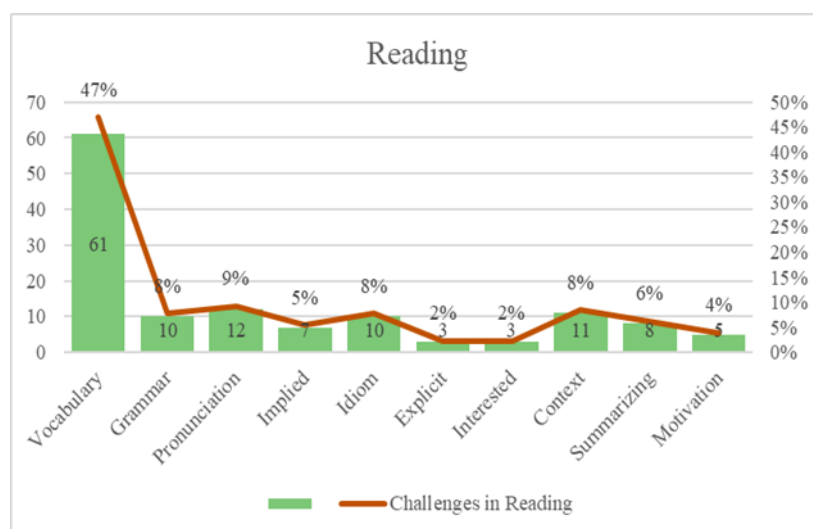


Figure 6. Students challenges in developing Reading skills.

Based on the questionnaire data, it can be concluded that English Language and Literature students at UIN Alauddin Makassar encounter challenges in developing reading competencies, particularly in mastering vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, understanding implicit and explicit meanings, maintaining interest, comprehending context, summarizing, and maintaining motivation. The most significant challenges reported by students included mastering vocabulary, with 47% (61 students), pronunciation, with 9% (12 students), and grammar and idioms, each with 8% (10 students).

To address challenges in reading skills, it is beneficial to read extensively, particularly within one's favorite genre. Reading comics or short articles online and cultivating a habit of reading across various genres, including storybooks, fiction novels, and non-fiction works, can be advantageous. Prior to reading, it is advisable to establish specific reading goals, whether it involves understanding the subject matter, summarizing the material, or simply reading for leisure. Setting reading goals can help in maintaining focus during reading sessions. Subsequently, practicing the identification of explicit and implied phrases, along with consistently preparing summaries of books or papers read, can prove to be highly effective in developing reading skills. Summarizing texts enhances comprehension and necessitates consistent practice for the advancement of this fundamental competence.

In basic English Proficiency competencies, including Listening, Speaking, Writing, and Reading, are closely intertwined in the process of language learning and mastery. To effectively learn and master a language, we must listen to words or sentences to imitate their pronunciation through speaking, reading, and writing. It's highly probable that if one learns to read first, the pronunciation may not be accurate, as it tends to be influenced by the pronunciation patterns of one's first language, which may have vastly different grammar and pronunciation rules. Hence, the challenges encountered in each proficiency competency are often similar, such as a lack of mastery in vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammatical structures. Moreover, students commonly express that their main challenge lies in a lack of motivation to learn English. This is particularly evident among Generation Z, who tend to prefer spending their time on social media platforms. Based on the data collected, some students have suggested solutions to address their

challenges in developing basic competencies in English proficiency. One suggestion is the implementation of additional classes specifically focused on speaking to enhance both basic competence and confidence levels in English conversation. Another effective approach is to encourage writing about daily activities, emphasizing the importance of discussing these activities in front of the class on a daily basis. Furthermore, there seems to be a need to reinforce the pressure of meeting deadlines in classes from 2020 and 2021, as some students, identifying themselves as Generation Z, have expressed a lack of motivation in their studies. According to reports from linkedin.com, Generation Z individuals tend to have a concentration span of only 10 minutes, and they may disengage from activities they find uninteresting. Hence, it is imperative to employ diverse teaching methods tailored to the needs of this millennial generation.

To capture the attention of students learning English, one effective method is to incorporate current issues and utilize technology. Given that this generation is technologically adept, strategies like exploring trending articles or videos and subsequently formulating conclusions to be presented orally can be highly engaging. Another approach involves project-based learning. Students generally prefer assignments structured as projects, such as creating English-language dramas, composing short stories or articles for international journals either individually or in groups, producing artwork with accompanying English interpretations, and participating in educational games. Even though they are not children, students still appreciate gamified learning experiences, which can significantly boost their enthusiasm for developing basic English proficiency. Moreover, this generation exhibits a strong interest in roles like graphic design, content creation, YouTubing, and other endeavors linked to social media. Therefore, students' assignments would be more effective if focused on creating blogs that promote English proficiency. Nevertheless, all such endeavors should be supervised by the lecturer due to students' limited ability to analyze information validation. The findings of this study are strongly aligned with several theoretical frameworks that underpin receptive skill development, particularly in the context of EFL learners. The challenges identified in both listening and reading competencies reflect the complex cognitive, linguistic, and motivational processes described in established theories. In the domain of **listening comprehension**, the students' difficulties—such as limited vocabulary, challenges in distinguishing similar pronunciations, unfamiliarity with accents, and unclear articulation—correspond directly with Rivers' (1983b) three phases of speech perception. Many students demonstrated weaknesses in the *recognition* and *grouping* phases, where identifying sounds as part of the language system and grouping them according to lexical and syntactic properties is essential for understanding spoken input. These weaknesses subsequently affect the *recoding* phase, which requires listeners to store and interpret the auditory message for meaning making. This connection reinforces Gilakjani & Ahmadi's (2011) argument that successful listening comprehension depends heavily on accurate decoding of linguistic input. Furthermore, the reported lack of motivation among students strengthens Todaka's (2008) assertion that motivation plays a pivotal role in both receptive and productive skill development. The findings illustrate that low motivation reduces engagement, cognitive persistence, and willingness to process challenging listening input. The suggested solutions, such as the use of authentic materials, interactive methods, and technology-based strategies, are consistent with motivational theory, as they enhance learner autonomy, interest, and self-efficacy—all of which contribute to improved perceptual and productive training. In terms of **reading skills**, the results also align strongly with theoretical perspectives on reading comprehension. The finding that 27% of students lacked mastery in interpreting texts and 33% had difficulty understanding explicit and implied meanings supports Xiao-ping's (2000) and Smith's (1973) view that reading involves the integration of **visual information** from the text and **non-visual information**, such as prior knowledge, linguistic competence, and schema. Students' struggles indicate limitations in activating or connecting their background knowledge with the textual input, which is essential for constructing meaning. Challenges related to advanced vocabulary, unfamiliar grammar structures, idiomatic expressions, and figurative language also reflect Ngabut's (2015) framework on cognitive reading skills. These difficulties demonstrate that students encounter obstacles in decoding linguistic features and

comprehending deeper layers of meaning. Students' reports of needing multiple readings to understand texts further illustrate the cognitive demands described in reading theories, where comprehension is not merely a visual task but a complex cognitive process involving prediction, inference, and schema activation.

The findings additionally intersect with the Receptive Skills Theory, which emphasizes the foundational role of listening and reading in language learning. The patterns of insufficient mastery identified through the questionnaire validate the significance of these skills in processing information, generating understanding, and supporting broader language development. The use of the Semantic Differential Scale (Oppenheim, 1992) in this research further enabled a clear differentiation of proficiency levels, reinforcing the nuanced nature of receptive skill mastery.

Overall, the alignment between the empirical findings and the theoretical frameworks suggests that the challenges faced by EFL students are deeply rooted in cognitive, linguistic, and motivational factors. These insights highlight the need for pedagogical strategies that address not only the linguistic components of receptive skills but also the cognitive processes and motivational elements essential for effective language learning.

D. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research effectively uses established theoretical frameworks to dissect and understand the challenges EFL students face in receptive skills. The findings not only quantify these challenges but also underscore the importance of addressing cognitive processes, motivation, and effective pedagogical strategies, all rooted in the discussed theories, to improve English language learning outcomes.

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