

Level Up Your Listening Skills: Senior High School Students' Perceptions of Their Busuu Learning Experience

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Abstract. Effective teaching media play an important role in the success of teaching English as a foreign language. A web-based application like Busuu can serve as an engaging tool for teachers to enhance students' language learning experiences. By employing a qualitative descriptive method, this study aims to identify students' perceptions of the Busuu application in developing their English listening skills and to examine the benefits and challenges they encounter while using it. The study involved classroom instruction with the Busuu application, questionnaires distributed to 35 participants, and interviews with six randomly selected participants. Results show that students responded positively to Busuu, noting improvements in their English listening skills through interactive practice, exposure to English speakers (native and non-native), and a broad vocabulary range. They described Busuu as an effective, user-friendly, enjoyable, and engaging learning tool. However, students faced challenges including limitations on premium features, internet connectivity issues, audio quality of materials, and difficulties understanding various English accents. Schools and educators should provide alternative offline resources, ensure reliable infrastructure, and advocate for support to access premium features. Additionally, scaffolding strategies like pre-listening activities and accent training can help students overcome difficulties with unfamiliar accents and unclear audio. Overall, while Busuu offers significant advantages for language learning, its instructional use should be carefully planned to address both educational opportunities and access-related limitations. This study contributes to EFL research by offering insights into students' perceptions of the Busuu application for listening practice. It highlights the pedagogical benefits and practical challenges of its use and provides implications for integrating web-based language applications into classroom practice, particularly concerning accessibility and technological limitations.

Keyword: Busuu application; Student perception; Teaching listening skills; Web-based application media

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching media play a vital role in the effectiveness of English as a foreign language instruction. By incorporating media, the teaching and learning process becomes more accessible and engaging for students. English learning resources encompass various forms of media that convey material to students (Rahmi, 2014). It is essential for teachers to enhance their understanding of how to effectively present materials through learning media. While traditional methods, such as using textbooks and teachers serving as role models, can provide authentic language use and immediate feedback, they often lead to a significant challenge: a lack of motivation among students. To foster engagement and motivation, English teachers should integrate various teaching media into their lessons. This approach makes the classroom experience more enjoyable and meaningful (Ezeh, Anidi, & Nwokolo, 2021; Sim & Ismail, 2023). In other words, teachers should not be seen as the sole source of knowledge; rather, engaging activities facilitated by technology can promote innovative learning strategies that enhance students' foreign language skills (Fatimah & Santiana, 2017; Liu, Zhang, & Gao, 2023).

Nowadays, teaching media are no longer limited to traditional methods or materials created manually by teachers; modern applications have emerged that simplify their use. For instance, web-based applications are programs that operate online via a browser interface after being installed on a remote server, thus eliminating the need for local installation. These applications enable users to interact with content and perform specific tasks, often involving data processing, user authentication, and real-time updates (Yasar, 2024). They are accessible on various devices and web browsers, thus making them convenient for everyday use. Additionally, they can be accessed anytime and anywhere with an internet connection, which is essential for creating responsive and interactive learning environments (Laurillard, 2012).

One such platform is Busuu (<https://www.busuu.com/en-US>), a language learning application designed to enhance users' language skills. Accessible via smartphones or the web, the Busuu supports English language learning by offering a variety of conversations and tasks delivered by native speakers (Busuu, 2025). The application provides an engaging and interactive environment for teachers to enrich their students' language learning experiences. Teachers can assign group tasks using the discussion feature while also providing individualized assignments tailored to each student's abilities. For instance, a teacher might encourage students to discuss the content of a conversation they have listened to or the new vocabulary they have learned. The quiz feature allows teachers to assess students' comprehension of the material, while the report feature enables easy monitoring of their learning progress. Additionally, the conversation feature fosters interaction between students and native speakers, further enhancing their language practice.

This web-based application is designed to enhance students' English language skills, particularly their listening abilities (Meniwati & Mutiaraningrum, 2022). The Busuu application includes various features aimed at improving students' listening skills, offering short exercises in real-life dialects with high-quality audio that ensures clear pronunciation. Key activities include filling in missing words from dialogues, matching sentences or pictures to audio clips, recording their voices to compare with native speakers, and receiving feedback to help correct mistakes. These activities enable students to enhance their listening skills through engaging conversations and structured exercises.

One method of teaching listening skills using the Busuu application involves selecting materials that match the students' skill levels. The teacher begins by introducing the listening topic and then plays the audio or video for the students. The first playback aims to help students grasp the main idea, while the second focuses on listening for details. Finally, the teacher and students discuss their answers to the listening questions based on what they heard. This method can be

further enhanced by incorporating activities such as conversations, listening to podcasts or stories, conducting question-and-answer sessions with students, and engaging actively with the materials. The goal is to effectively improve students' communication skills.

Several studies have examined the effectiveness of the Busuu application for learning English. Mulyadi and Maesaroh (2021) found that teaching speaking through the Busuu application effectively enhances students' speaking skills. Furthermore, Susanto et al. (2022) demonstrated that the impact of using Busuu's online platform on students' desire to learn vocabulary is greater than its effect on actual vocabulary learning outcomes, indicating that this platform positively influences vocabulary acquisition. Similarly, Utami and Astutik (2024) found that using the Busuu application familiarizes students with listening to native English speakers, which enhances their understanding of intonation, accent, and vocabulary usage, as well as their simultaneous listening and reading abilities. Lastly, AlDakhil and AlFadda (2022) showed that the Busuu application is user-friendly and serves as a valuable educational tool for language acquisition.

However, researchers have also identified several challenges regarding the effectiveness of the Busuu application. Nushi and Jenabzadeh (2016) note that students encounter difficulties due to the limited availability of free materials, which are mostly basic. Accessing intermediate and advanced content requires a premium account. Furthermore, a poor internet connection can hinder the application's performance, as it relies on a stable connection to function properly. Some schools may also lack the necessary infrastructure to support internet access, and their policies might restrict the use of smartphones and the internet as learning tools (Mali et al., 2023).

Additionally, Yi, Li, Zhang, and Shadiev (2025) explain that while Busuu is helpful for learning languages, it does not provide the same immersive experience as virtual reality or the instant feedback that speech recognition tools offer. This may make it harder for learners to stay engaged and improve skills such as pronunciation and natural speaking. Furthermore, although Busuu provides automatic feedback, it is not as detailed or personalized as the guidance a real teacher can offer. As a result, students might overlook small mistakes or struggle to grasp more complex aspects of the language. Rahmawati, Wijayanti, and Fargianti (2024) further highlight that students using the Busuu application for learning face challenges in the classroom, particularly when listening to and conversing with native speakers, which can be intimidating. Teachers also encounter difficulties with the application, as they need to facilitate interactions between themselves and the students to create a more engaging classroom environment.

The reviewed studies indicate that the Busuu application is generally effective in enhancing English language skills, including speaking, vocabulary, and listening. However, most of these studies primarily focus on learning outcomes and instructional effectiveness, such as skill improvement, learner motivation, and application usability. Although several challenges related to access, feedback, and classroom implementation have been identified, these issues are often examined from a technical or instructional standpoint rather than from the learners' perspectives.

There remains a significant research gap in understanding students' personal perceptions and experiences with the Busuu application, especially regarding ESL/EFL listening instruction. Although previous studies recognize that Busuu offers exposure to both native and non-native English input, they fall short in examining how students perceive the quality of listening materials, the clarity of audio, and accent variation. Furthermore, it is unclear how these factors impact their listening comprehension. Additionally, there has been limited qualitative research capturing students' perspectives on the benefits and challenges they face while using the application in real classroom settings.

Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by qualitatively exploring students' perceptions of the Busuu application as a tool for developing English listening skills. By

investigating both the perceived benefits and challenges, the study offers valuable pedagogical insights that can help educators and institutions integrate web-based language learning applications more effectively in ESL/EFL contexts.

In particular, this study aims to explore how Indonesian EFL students perceive the Busuu application as a tool for learning English listening skills and to identify the benefits and challenges, they encounter. The research is expected to serve as a reference for future studies and to provide insights into students' personal perceptions of the Busuu application, including its advantages and challenges in helping them learn English listening skills, particularly among high school students in Indonesia.

This study aims to address the following research question:

1. How does using the Busuu application help students develop their English listening skills?
2. What benefits do students gain from using the Busuu application to improve their English listening skills?
3. What challenges do students encounter when learning English listening skills with the Busuu application?

METHOD

The research employed a qualitative descriptive method (Holly, 2014) to explore students' understanding, experiences, and perspectives regarding the use of the Busuu application in their English learning, particularly its effectiveness in improving English listening skills. Through a purposive sampling technique, the study involved 35 students from Class XI B at a private senior high school in Malang, Indonesia, consisting of 12 males and 23 females. The school principal permitted only one class to participate in the study and selected Class XI B as the sample. Consequently, the researchers adhered to the principal's decision. The Busuu application had not been previously used as a medium for English learning at this school. Therefore, the first researcher, responsible for conducting the classroom instruction, introduced the application as an educational tool. The teaching sessions were held over two meetings, each lasting 80 minutes.

Classroom instruction was conducted on two occasions, as the school and English teacher only permitted the researchers to carry out research during two meetings focused on learning materials. In the first meeting, the first researcher introduced the Busuu application and covered material related to past tenses. The second meeting centered on discussing recount texts. A recount text is an English composition that narrates a story about a past experience or event (Anderson & Anderson, 2011), with the aim of entertaining or informing the reader. A key characteristic of recount texts is the use of past tense verbs. Past tenses in English describe events that have already occurred, completed actions, habitual practices, or facts from the past. Learning was facilitated through discussions that aligned with the learning objectives. The necessary equipment included a laptop, an LCD projector, and speakers to display material from the Busuu application, while students used smartphones to install or access Busuu on the website.

The lesson plan consists of three main components: pre-teaching, whilst-teaching, and post-teaching. During the pre-teaching stage, the first researcher opened the lesson by greeting the students, assessing their prior knowledge of the simple past tense, and identifying potential challenges in understanding and using it. In the whilst-teaching stage, the first researcher introduced the Busuu application, provided explanations, and guided students through exercises related to the past tense and recount texts that connected to the existing material. Finally, in the post-teaching stage, the first researcher summarized the content and assigned homework in the application for students to complete at home.

The researchers distributed a questionnaire to gather data on students' perceptions after the second classroom instruction. A total of 35 students answered 26 questions for data collection. These questions addressed various aspects, including EFL learners' perceptions of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (6 questions), general perceptions of Busuu (2 questions), views on

Busuu as an easy learning tool (5 questions), EFL learners' perspectives on Busuu as a useful learning tool (7 questions), expectations regarding Busuu (2 questions), and challenges related to Busuu as perceived by EFL learners (4 questions). Respondents rated their answers to 22 questions using a 5-point Likert scale and provided open responses to four additional questions. The questionnaire was adapted from AlDakhil and AlFadda (2022, pp. 14–15) and was written in Indonesian.

Interviews were conducted to triangulate the findings from the questionnaire. Using a semi-structured interview format, six randomly selected students responded to seven prepared questions, along with follow-up questions based on their specific responses. The interview questions aimed to explore these perceptions in greater detail than the initial questionnaire and were conducted in Indonesian to minimize misunderstandings.

The data analysis model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) was used to analyze data from questionnaires and interviews. The four stages of data analysis were conducted. First, data collection involved transcribing and organizing the data. Second, data reduction arranged the questionnaire responses in a spreadsheet format, with each question undergoing open coding to identify categories. Selected codes were then grouped into broader categories through axial coding. In the final step, selective coding identified the primary themes relevant to the study questions and created a narrative outlining the connections between these themes. Interview recordings were also transcribed and analyzed in a similar manner.

The third stage is data display. The researchers selected the most effective format for presenting the data during this step. Tables displayed the frequency and percentage of students' responses to each question, while a narrative format was used for the open-ended questionnaire data. Additionally, a narrative presentation of the interview data highlighted the themes that emerged from the analysis of students' perceptions of the Busuu application. In the final stage, conclusion drawing and verification, the researchers evaluated the data, drew inferences, and compiled the key findings of the investigation.

For data verification, the researchers used triangulation. This method allowed cross-checking questionnaire data with interview data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. The researchers analyzed both sources for patterns, themes, and relationships, then compared the results to identify similarities and differences, validating the research findings. The researchers presented the results, noting that triangulation supported the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

a. The Use of the Busuu Application and Students' Perspectives on Its Effectiveness for Developing English Listening Skills

Based on the questionnaire responses, most students agree that mobile phones are effective for learning English, saving time and creating an interactive environment. As shown in Table 1, item number 1, stating that mobile phones are effective tools for EFL learners, received a score of 100%. This includes 25 participants (71.4%) who strongly agree and 10 participants (28.6%) who agree.

Table 1 Students' Perception towards Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (N=35)

No	Questionnaire Items	Frequency and Percentage				
		SD	D	N	A	SA
1	Mobile phones can be an effective tool for EFL learners	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	10 (28.6%)	25 (71.4%)

2	Portability is an important aspect of mobile phones	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (14.3%)	19 (54.3%)	11 (31.4%)
3	Using mobile phones in English language learning saves money	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	14 (40%)	8 (22.9%)	13 (37.1%)
4	Using mobile phones in English language learning saves time	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	9 (25.7%)	13 (37.1%)	13 (37.1%)
5	Mobile phones can provide EFL learners with an interactive learning Environment	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (17.1%)	16 (45.7%)	13 (37.1%)
6	Learning English through a mobile application is new to me	0 (0%)	6 (17.1%)	5 (14.3%)	14 (40%)	10 (28.6%)

SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree; and SA = Strongly Agree

It is important to note, however, that a significant proportion of participants, 22.2%, responded neutrally across the five items. Specifically, item number 3, which states that using mobile phones for English language learning saves money, received a neutral response from 40% of participants. This indicates uncertainty about the effectiveness of mobile phones as teaching tools, particularly for developing listening skills. This skepticism may arise from the awareness that mobile phones can incur costs, such as purchasing internet data to access online applications.

Regarding their general perception of Busuu, students believe that its features effectively support their learning, as shown in Table 2 below. The highest percentage score comes from item number 8, achieving a score of 100%. This includes 24 participants (68.6%) who strongly agree and 11 participants (31.4%) who agree with the statement.

Table 2 Students' Perception of Busuu in General (N=35)

No	Questionnaire Items	Frequency and Percentage				
		SD	D	N	A	SA
7	I like the features in the Busuu application (grammar practice, vocabulary practice, reading practice, writing practice, listening practice, and sharing feedback with different users)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (2.9%)	11 (31.4%)	23 (65.7%)
8	I think that the automated feedback in the Busuu application is excellent (when your answer turns green if correct or red when you make an error)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	11 (31.4%)	24 (68.6%)

SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree; and SA = Strongly Agree

Regarding their perception of the Busuu application as an easy learning tool, most students generally agree that it is indeed easy to use. As shown in Table 3 below, this consensus stems from their belief that accessing the Busuu application was straightforward and enjoyable. The highest percentage score comes from item number 13, which states that they enjoyed learning English listening skills using Busuu, with a score of 97.1%. This includes 20 participants (57.1%) who strongly agree and 14 participants (40%) who agree with the statement.

Table 3 Students' Perception towards Busuu as an Easy Learning Tool (N=35)

No	Questionnaire Items	Frequency and Percentage				
		SD	D	N	A	SA

9	Registering to Busuu was easy	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (11.4%)	13 (37.1%)	18 (51.4%)
10	The using instructions in Busuu were clear	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (14.3%)	11 (31.4%)	19 (54.3%)
11	I find Busuu simple in design and easy to navigate	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (11.4%)	11 (31.4%)	20 (57.1%)
12	I think of Busuu as an accessible resource when I struggle with a particular listening topic in class	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (11.4%)	16 (45.7%)	15 (42.9%)
13	I enjoyed learning English listening using Busuu	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (2.9%)	14 (40%)	20 (57.1%)

SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree; and SA = Strongly Agree

The findings above are further supported by results from interviews with the participants. These findings indicate that Busuu serves as a valuable learning tool. Overall, the participants reported that the Busuu application enhances their English listening abilities for four main reasons. The first reason is that the application effectively improves listening skills, as noted by Participant 2. Please note that this quotation and the subsequent ones are English translations of the original Indonesian texts.

“I think this application is very effective because it saves time, is efficient, and also does not use a lot of storage data on the mobile phone, and listening to the audio here really makes me understand and is very clear, like that sis.” (Participant 2)

The second reason is that the Busuu application is an easy and comfortable learning medium, as stated by Participants 1 and 2.

“It's good, sis, because it's easy to understand” (Participant 1)

“... comfortable to use” (Participant 2)

The next reason is that the Busuu application is enjoyable and exciting to use, as stated by Participants 4 and 6 below.

“...it's fun, sis, if what, learning from mobile phones” (Participant 4)

“The application is exciting, the point is exciting... addicted in the end, it's fun” (Participant 6)

The final reason is that the Busuu application focuses not only on listening skills but also on comprehensive English learning, as noted by participant 6.

“There's listening, there's reading, there's writing—though for writing on the phone you type, yeah—but we get to know the writing order, like what comes first, so we know. And there's a lot of grammar too. The format is also like a game so it's just fun to use the application.” (Participant 6).

Additionally, participants highlighted several features of the Busuu application that enhance English listening skills. These features include automated feedback, audio for listening practice, videos showcasing native speaker accents, translation options, a replay feature for exercises, and customization based on student levels. The first feature, automated feedback, was specifically mentioned by participants 5 and 6, as noted below.

“...what is right and wrong is that we are told to guess which one is right and which one is wrong, then if it is right, the writing is correct, if it is wrong, then we will definitely be told how to correct it.” (Participant 5)

“...well, later, if we make a mistake in saying, the writing is red ...corrected, well that's quite helpful.” (Participant 6)

The second feature that aids their English listening skills is the audio component, as mentioned by participant 5.

“I think it is, because it's easier on the phone, and it also has, like, a voice feature so we can listen—like for example, there's, umm, like an introduction, right, and we're confused about how to read it, how to, umm... [The pronunciation]”

“Yeah, there's a voice feature there so we can listen and understand how to read it” (Participant 5).

The third feature is the video, which includes the accent of an English native speaker as well as the accents of people from different countries, as noted by participants 1 and 6.

“The person ... more understanding in what, like yes, like we can clearly speak English like that.” (Participant 1)

“It's fun, what's fun is the accent because there are many kinds of accents, there are Indian ones too, it's fun to listen to.” (Participant 6)

The fourth feature is the translation feature, which is also included, as stated by Participant 1.

“It's like, umm, how do I say this, it's like usually there's—how do I explain it—there's also the meaning shown [translation].” (Participant 1)

The next feature is a replay option in the exercise, as mentioned by participants 3.

“Yeah, and you can repeat it again.” (Participant 3)

The last feature that aids in learning English listening is the student level customization feature, as stated by participant 6.

“Because in the Student Worksheet it's not that complete, but in Busuu there's actually a lot, and the levels go from basic to advanced like that, step by step too.” (Participant 6)

b. The Benefits Students Gain from Using the Busuu Application to Improve Their English Listening Skills

The researchers also explored the benefits students gain from learning English listening through the Busuu application, based on the results of questionnaires and interviews. Table 4 below presents these benefits as perceived by the participants.

Table 4 Students' Perception towards Busuu as a Useful Learning Tool (N=35)

No	Questionnaire Items	Frequency and Percentage				
		SD	D	N	A	SA
14	Busuu has given me the courage to participate with my teacher in class	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	9 (25.7%)	17 (48.6%)	9 (25.7%)
15	Busuu has given me a chance to design a learning plan that suits my needs	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	11 (31.4%)	10 (28.6%)	14 (40%)

16	Busuu has increased my responsibility for my own learning	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (20%)	20 (57.1%)	8 (22.9%)
17	I think of Busuu as a helpful learning English tool	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	16 (45.7%)	19 (54.3%)
18	Busuu has improved my overall knowledge of English, especially English listening skills	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (14.3%)	16 (45.7%)	14 (40%)
19	Busuu makes me more confident in listening to English conversation	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (17.1%)	17 (48.6%)	12 (34.3%)
20	Busuu provides relevant and engaging material for English listening practice	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (2.9%)	14 (40%)	20 (57.1%)
21	Busuu was as I expected when I downloaded it	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (14.3%)	21 (60%)	9 (25.7%)
22	Busuu has increased my interest in learning the language	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (8.6%)	15 (42.9%)	17 (48.6%)

SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree; and SA = Strongly Agree

According to the table above, most students generally agree that Busuu is a useful learning tool, particularly for improving their English listening skills. The three main benefits perceived by the students are that the Busuu application acts as a helpful English learning resource, provides relevant and engaging materials for listening practice, and increases students' interest in learning English. The percentage of students recognizing these three benefits exceeds 95%. However, it is noteworthy that the number of students who responded neutrally to questionnaire item number 15 (regarding whether Busuu has given them the opportunity to design a learning plan that suits their needs) is relatively high, reaching 31%. This suggests that there are certain obstacles or challenges they face while using this web-based application. In other words, while the students are aware of the benefits of the Busuu application in improving their English listening skills, some encounter challenges—either technical or non-technical—related to using the application. These potential challenges will be reported in the next section.

The benefits of using Busuu, as identified from the questionnaire data, are further confirmed by the interviews conducted with participants. During the interview sessions, several advantages were noted by the students. The first benefit is that the application enhances their English learning process, particularly in developing listening skills, as stated by participants 5 and 6.

“For improving, for me yeah, it has improved because I got to know how to pronounce things and also how to write correctly.” (Participant 5)

“The voice feature, yeah. And also the correct-or-wrong part—like we’re told to guess which one is right and which one is wrong, and if it’s right the writing is correct, and if it’s wrong it will tell us what the correct one is.” (Participant 5)

“Kind of.... Yeah, because I hehe umm usually do listening from movies, sis, but in movies it’s not that clear. Now in Busuu, maybe because it’s a learning application, it’s just clearer—even without looking at the text, I can, God willing, understand what the speaker is saying.” (Participant 6)

The second benefit they gain is that the application assists them with pronunciation and articulation while learning to listen to English. This was mentioned by participants 1 and 5.

“Yeah, after listening from the Busuu app it’s like, Oh, so that’s how you read it.” (Participant 1)

“...there is a voice feature so we can listen and understand how to read it” (Participant 5)

The third benefit, as stated by Participant 2, is that the application helps to organize vocabulary and enhances writing.

“I got to organize vocabulary well, I can write English better, and of course I got new knowledge, sis.” (Participant 2)

Other benefits include the application’s ability to enhance knowledge (noted by participants 5), increase motivation and interest in learning English (mentioned by participant 2), and improve English grammar skills (highlighted by participant 6).

“The benefit is I can understand things more deeply, sis. I mean, I’m the type who doesn’t like English, but after knowing about the app, I understood everything. At first I didn’t like it, but now I do. Like learning, you know, learning more deeply. Yeah, like that hehe.” (Participant 5)

“Yes, sis, it really improved my ability because in class I sometimes get bored with learning that’s just looking at the whiteboard and writing only. And this app, it can make my fear go away and make my motivation to learn go up.” (Participant 2)

“And there’s a lot of grammar too. The format is also like a game so it’s just fun to use the app. ...because in the Student Worksheet it’s not that complete, but in Busuu there’s actually a lot, and the levels go from basic to advanced like that, step by step too.” (Participant 6)

c. The Challenges Students Face When Learning English Listening with the Busuu Application

The researchers also examined the challenges students face while learning English listening skills through the Busuu application, based on the results of questionnaires and interviews with participants. Table 5 below outlines the challenges that participants encountered when using the Busuu application.

Table 5 EFL learners’ perceptions towards Busuu challenge (N=35)

No	Questionnaire Items	Frequency and Percentage		
		D	N	A
23	Do you think the audio quality of some of the listening materials is not clear enough?	23 (65.7%)	4 (11.4%)	8 (22.9%)
24	Do you think speakers’ accents are sometimes difficult to understand?	21 (60%)	6 (17.1%)	8 (22.9%)

25	Do you think the premium features on the application hinder your learning?	10 (28.6%)	4 (11.4%)	21 (60%)
26	Do you think an internet connection is an obstacle when learning using the Busuu application?	12 (34.3%)	5 (14.3%)	18 (51.4%)

D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree

According to the table above, students face four main obstacles in their experience of learning English listening through the Busuu application. The first challenge is that not all features of the Busuu application are freely accessible; only premium accounts can access all available features. This limitation clearly hinders 60% of the students in their English learning. Direct quotations from some of these participants' statements, collected from the open-format questions, support this finding as listed below.

"Yes, because it can't all be learned." (Participant 2)

"Yes, because some important material is locked behind paid features, so learning feels limited if only use the free version." (Participant 20)

During the interview session, participants reported facing challenges with the premium features of the Busuu application, which display advertisements while using the English listening function, as noted by participants 5 and 6 below.

"If we don't pay, we will definitely have advertisements ... the ads are like a waste of time and very annoying ... it's been boring for a long time." (Participant 5)

"...maybe the ads are quite a lot because it's not premium hehe" (Participant 6)

The second challenge is the Internet connection. Over 50% of respondents believe that a lack of Internet access hinders their English learning with the Busuu application. Direct quotations from participants' responses to the open-format questions support this finding, as outlined below.

"Yes, internet connection can be an issue when learning with Busuu, especially as most of the materials and audios require online access to work smoothly." (Participant 20)

"Yes, because if the connection is slow, then the Busuu application loads first." (Participant 27)

During the interview session, participants also reported having difficulties with the internet connection, as highlighted, for example, by Participant 5 below.

"...the internet if for example the signal is not available, cannot be used" (Participant 5)

Other obstacles include the audio quality of the listening materials and the accents of both native and non-native English speakers; however, only about 23% of respondents identified these as issues. Direct quotations from participants' responses to the open-ended questions support this finding, as detailed below.

"Yes, on some of the material on Busuu, the audio quality can be a little unclear, mainly due to the speaker's accent or high speaking speed. But in general, the recording quality is quite good." (Participant 20)

“Yes, because there are some that I think the conversation is not clear enough, so it is difficult to listen to.” (Participant 28)

“Yes, the accent of native speakers on Busuu can sometimes be hard to understand, especially for beginners, due to the natural speed of speech and pronunciation.” (Participant 20)

“Yes, sometimes native accents are hard to understand, especially if speaking too fast or using unfamiliar vocabulary.” (Participant 28)

During the interview session, Participant 6 reported difficulties understanding the various accents of native speakers, as quoted below.

“I think accents too, there are various accents but there are some accents whose pronunciation is less clear, whether I rarely listen to the accent, what is the accent is foreign, in my opinion it is a bit foreign so I don't understand it but if it is Indian, God willing, it is clear because the accent is similar to Indonesians” (Participant 6)

Discussion

Overall, the findings indicate that students responded positively to the Busuu application, viewing it as an effective tool for enhancing their English listening skills. This positive response can be attributed to Busuu's structured learning experiences, which include interactive listening activities, authentic spoken English, and immediate feedback. These elements collectively foster active engagement among learners. From a sociocultural perspective, these features align with Vygotsky's (1978) theory, which asserts that learning is facilitated through interaction and meaningful engagement with language input. Busuu supports this process by allowing learners to repeatedly engage with spoken language in a low-anxiety, self-paced environment, thus promoting a deeper understanding of listening input.

These findings also align with the principles of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) outlined by Warschauer and Healey (1998), particularly the idea that technology enhances learning by providing authenticity, interaction, and learner autonomy. The positive feedback from students indicates that Busuu goes beyond merely digitizing traditional listening exercises; it transforms listening practice by seamlessly integrating audio, text, and feedback in ways that are difficult to replicate in conventional classroom settings (Malik & Behera, 2024). This integration is why students found the application enjoyable and engaging rather than burdensome, which is crucial for maintaining consistent listening practice.

The findings are consistent with those of Wulandari and Sabat (2024) and AlDakhil and AlFadda (2022), who noted high learner satisfaction attributed to Busuu's user-friendly interface and automated feedback. However, the present study enhances these findings by demonstrating the importance of these features for listening development. For instance, automated feedback serves as immediate scaffolding, allowing learners to identify errors and adjust their listening strategies in real time. This mechanism not only explains why students enjoyed the application but also why they noticed tangible improvements in their listening skills. Additionally, the findings of Susanto et al. (2022) regarding ease of use are further supported here, as improved usability reduces cognitive load, enabling learners to focus more on processing input rather than navigating the platform.

Students' perceptions indicate that Busuu effectively supports the development of listening skills by increasing exposure to authentic spoken English and providing opportunities for repeated listening. This aligns with the findings of Nabila, Angraini, and Permana (2024), who reported that repeated interaction with audio materials enhances comprehension. The effectiveness of Busuu in this area appears to stem from its integration of quizzes, dialogues, and native-speaker audio, which fosters active listening rather than passive exposure. Additionally, Rahmawati et al. (2024) highlighted the importance of enjoyment in engagement; in their study,

enjoyment served as a motivational driver that encouraged learners to persevere through challenging listening tasks.

Moreover, specific features of Busuu, such as replay options, translations, level-based customization, and exposure to varied accents, help clarify how listening development occurs. These features align with Mayer's (2002) multimedia learning theory, which suggests that learning is more effective when information is processed through multiple channels. In Busuu, the simultaneous availability of audio and visual inputs allows learners to form stronger connections between form and meaning, particularly when encountering unfamiliar vocabulary or pronunciation. The current study builds on Utami and Astutik's (2024) findings regarding accent exposure, demonstrating that such exposure not only enhances comprehension but also increases learners' awareness of English as a global language with diverse accents.

Despite these advantages, students also faced significant challenges that highlight the limitations of Busuu's effectiveness. Restrictions on premium features limit access to advanced listening materials, hindering skill development. From Warschauer's (2003) perspective on access and the digital divide, these findings suggest that pedagogical potential alone cannot compensate for inadequate access to technological resources. Additionally, unstable internet connections disrupt listening practice, interrupting the continuity essential for developing comprehension skills. This explains why some learners felt frustrated, even though they generally held positive attitudes toward the application.

Difficulties in understanding both native and non-native accents highlight the ongoing challenges of listening comprehension, even in technologically advanced environments. According to Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, learners benefit from exposure to a variety of speech models. However, without adequate scaffolding, such as pre-listening activities or guided strategies, these models can result in anxiety and misunderstanding. Previous studies by Khairunnisa et al. (2021) and Rahmawati et al. (2024) found that unclear audio and unfamiliar accents hinder comprehension. The current findings suggest that these challenges arise not from ineffective exposure, but from the need for structured pedagogical support to assist learners in processing complex auditory input.

Taken together, these findings indicate that while Busuu offers valuable tools for mobile-assisted listening practice, its pedagogical effectiveness largely depends on how teachers mediate instruction rather than on the technology itself. Features such as quizzes, dialogues, automated feedback, and exposure to various accents enhance learner autonomy and engagement. However, without proper pedagogical support, students may struggle to fully utilize these benefits. This underscores the essential role of teachers in guiding students' interactions with the application to ensure that listening activities are suitable for their development and aligned with their linguistic needs.

From a sociocultural perspective, scaffolding helps learners connect their independent abilities with what they can achieve with support (Vygotsky, 1978). In the context of Busuu-mediated listening, teachers can facilitate this process by creating pre-listening activities that activate background knowledge, introduce key vocabulary, and establish clear listening objectives before students engage with app-based audio materials. This preparation helps learners manage cognitive load and reduces anxiety when facing fast speech, unfamiliar vocabulary, or varied accents, the challenges reported by participants in this study. Without such scaffolding, students may listen to materials repeatedly without effectively processing their meaning, which limits the educational benefits of this repeated exposure.

Teacher guidance is essential for helping students interpret and act on the automated feedback provided by the application. While Busuu offers immediate corrective responses, this

feedback often emphasizes correctness rather than the use of strategies or explanations. Teachers can address this limitation by encouraging students to reflect on their listening errors and discuss the reasons for misunderstandings, such as weak stress recognition or unfamiliar accents. They can also assist students in applying targeted listening strategies, such as predicting content, focusing on keywords, or recognizing discourse markers. In this way, teachers transform automated feedback into a valuable learning opportunity that fosters metacognitive awareness rather than merely providing surface-level corrections (Ellis, 2009).

In addition, teachers play a crucial role in enhancing Busuu materials to address gaps in access and content depth. Given that premium restrictions and internet instability can hinder continuous engagement, teachers can provide offline supplementary materials such as transcripts, audio recordings, or teacher-created listening tasks to reinforce concepts introduced in the application. These resources help maintain instructional continuity and contextualize Busuu activities within the broader curriculum. This integration ensures that Busuu serves not as a stand-alone tool but as a complementary component of structured listening instruction.

Moreover, teacher mediation plays a crucial role in helping students become familiar with various English accents, which they find both beneficial and challenging. While Busuu provides exposure to both native and non-native accents, teachers can enhance comprehension by explicitly discussing pronunciation differences, explaining common phonological variations, and fostering tolerance for ambiguity in authentic listening situations. Guided reflection and classroom discussions after app-based listening tasks allow learners to accept accent diversity and build confidence when encountering real-world spoken English (Goh, 2010).

Overall, these findings suggest that Busuu's pedagogical value is best realized when teachers actively mediate its use through scaffolding, strategic guidance, and curricular supplementation. Rather than replacing the teacher's role, Busuu transforms it, positioning teachers as facilitators who create supportive learning environments, assist learners in interpreting digital feedback, and connect technological possibilities with educational goals. This highlights that successful mobile-assisted language learning depends not only on advanced technology but also on effective instructional design and teacher expertise (Chapelle, 2001; Stockwell, 2013).

Finally, since this research focuses specifically on senior high school students, future studies should include participants from both lower and higher educational levels to gather a broader range of data that could enhance the implementation of E-learning. Additionally, more experimental research is needed to assess the effectiveness of the application. Future researchers should adopt a mixed-methods approach that combines both quantitative and qualitative methods, including a control group. This will enable comparisons between students who use the Busuu application and those who do not. By taking these steps, researchers can significantly contribute to the development of effective English learning methods in Indonesian schools.

Schools should consider integrating the Busuu application into their English listening programs while also supporting further research. They need to improve their internet facilities and resources to promote online-based learning. Furthermore, schools can collaborate with researchers to conduct experimental studies using a mixed-methods approach with control groups, allowing for a more comprehensive evaluation of the application's effectiveness (Zhou, Zhou, & Machtmes, 2024). In doing so, schools can actively contribute to the advancement of more effective technology-based English language learning methods in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that the Busuu application effectively enhances students' English listening skills. Students report high satisfaction levels and various benefits from the application, viewing it positively as a language learning platform. Tools like Busuu can serve as valuable supplements to classroom activities. However, students also face challenges, such as limitations on premium features, internet connectivity issues, audio quality of listening materials, and

difficulties understanding various English accents. Therefore, while technology like Busuu offers significant advantages for language learning, its instructional use should be thoughtfully planned to address both educational opportunities and access-related limitations.

The present study has several weaknesses that should be acknowledged. It is descriptive and exploratory, relying on data gathered from students' perceptions through questionnaires and interviews. As a result, the findings may not accurately reflect the effectiveness of the Busuu application in enhancing students' English listening skills, as perceptions can be influenced by various factors. Additionally, the qualitative method used in this research limits the ability to draw broader generalizations. To properly assess the application's effectiveness, further experimental research is necessary. Future researchers should consider employing a mixed-method approach that combines both quantitative and qualitative methods, as well as a control group. This will enable a comparison between students who use the Busuu application and those who do not. By taking these steps, researchers can make a more meaningful contribution to the development of effective learning methods in Indonesian EFL education.

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