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Exploring EFL Students' Success Attributions in an Online Academic Listening Class

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Abstract

Attributions are one of important factors that help students achieve their success especially in an online class setting. This study explores attributions that help students succeed in their academic listening class that was conducted in an online learning environment. Taking on qualitative research, the researcher conducted a semi-structured interview with five university students at a private university in Central Java, Indonesia. The findings show that teacher's roles, self-efficacy and motivation, and the use of technology in online learning help students to pass and gain good grades in an online Academic Listening class. The results are expected to benefit EFL teachers in finding practical ideas to enhance their students' motivation in the academic listening class and EFL students in finding ways to be successful in their academic listening class. Practical recommendations for EFL teachers and students as well as directions for future research are presented.

Keywords: *academic listening, online class, success attributions.*

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INTRODUCTION

Listening is one of the essential language skills, especially in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Hamouda, 2013; Susilowati, 2020). Even though listening is essential, many EFL students feel that listening is one of the most challenging skills to learn and master (Ellïalti & Batur, 2021; Graham, 2011; Vandergrift, 2007; Wolfgramm et al., 2016). In particular, when taking Academic Listening courses, the challenges are there. A similar problem happened in an Academic Listening class conducted online through the Schoology and Zoom application at the English Language Education Program at one of the universities in Central Java. If this type of problem continues in the listening class, it can negatively impact the students' listening process and performance in learning English. Therefore, it might be crucial to explore attributions that help students pass and be successful in their Academic Listening class at U. With this background in mind, this study aims to answer the following research question: *What are the attributions for the student's success in an online Academic Listening class?*. A plethora of research has been carried out internationally to investigate learners' success attributions in an Academic Listening class. In Japan, for example, Rose et al. (2019) reported on a study that investigated English language proficiency, motivation, and academic language skills in an English medium instruction (EMI) university context. The researchers developed a questionnaire to elicit the data required. The questionnaire was collected from 146 students from an EMI business program at a Japanese university and the follow-up interviews involved seven students. The findings revealed that some factors such as motivation, lecture comprehension, and English proficiency might improve students' success in their listening class. The following can be said in response to the literature that the researcher has reviewed. First, the research gap that the researcher found from the previous research is that most of the previous research studies were conducted in face-to-face class setting.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study aimed to explore students' attribution for success in their online Academic Listening class. To achieve this objective, the researcher used a qualitative method. The data was collected from an online Academic Listening class conducted via Zoom taken place at the English Language Education Program in one of the universities in Central Java. LMS (Learning Management Systems) used in the class were Schoology or Flearn used by the lectures to put all class information and assignments for the students and YouTube for the IELTS recording or audio for students to practice. Next, the research participants were five EFL students from the Academic Listening class. They were selected using purposive sampling; More specifically, in this research, the selected participants were those who had taken the Academic Listening class at in the semester 2 of 2021/2022 academic year and passed the class with an excellent score (A/AB) to explore the success attributions of the participants. There were Natania Edeline (NE), Marsha Luneta (ML), Anugradea Niesha (AN), Johanna Jerusha (JJ) and Gracia Marchelly (GM) as participants in this research. In order to collect the data from the participant, this research conducted a semi-structured interview. For the data collection procedures, the researcher did some steps. First, the researcher contacted the participants to ask about their willingness to do the online interview via Zoom and set the time for the interview schedule. Second, the researcher gave the interview questions before the interview schedule to allow the students to dwell and ponder their experiences. That way helped the researcher to get richer information during the interview(Englander, 2012). Third, the researcher confirmed the interview schedule and reminded the participants about the interview two days before the interview time. Last, the researcher started to interview the participants based on the researcher's question and asked some probing questions based on the participants' answers. The interview took around 15-20 minutes for each participant and the participants were allowed to answer the

questions using *Bahasa Indonesia* so that they could give deeper and richer answers. The interview was audio recorded. Last, The steps of data analysis procedures were first, the researcher transcribed the interview result. The researcher used a clean transcript for the data analysis needs. Second, the researcher reread the transcription, highlighting some words or phrases related to the research questions. Third, the researcher considered possible meanings to help develop the themes by counting the words that are already highlighted and putting them on the table. As a result of the interview session, the researcher identified which themes appear most frequently. Next, the researcher developed the themes to answer the research questions. Last, the researcher checked the themes as the answers to the research question.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the researcher presents the findings and discussion about EFL students' success attributions in their online academic listening class. The main themes concerning the students' success attributions in their Academic Listening class were: teacher's roles in the classroom, self-efficacy and self-motivation, appropriate learning environment and the benefits of technology in online learning. Table 1 depicts the results.

Table 1 Interview Results

Attributions for Students' Success in Academic Listening Class	Number (Themes that shown based on interviewee answers)	Percentage (%)
Teacher's roles in the classroom	9	24.3
Self-efficacy and self-motivation	8	22.0
The benefits of technology in online learning	6	16.2
Supportive learning environment	6	16.2
The importance of note-taking skills	5	13.5
Easy-accessed materials	2	5.4
Final grades	1	2.7
Total		100

The following discussion explains the success attributions that can help students pass the Academic Listening class. Table 1 informed four attributions that help students to pass their Academic Listening class successfully. They are teacher's roles in the classroom, Self-efficacy and Self-Motivation, supportive learning environment and benefits of technology in online learning.

Teacher's Roles in the Classroom

Based on Table 1, teacher roles are the most frequent answer that helps students succeed, such as in explaining to the student's about the learning materials and activities, in the Online Academic Listening class. Also, motivation given in the classroom. Teacher explanations help students to gain a better understanding towards the material that is given. Also, motivation from the teacher is needed to help students pass the Academic Listening class. The students admitted that teacher explanations and motivation affected their scores in passing Academic Listening classes:

> Excerpt 1:
> The material explained and given by the lecturer really helped me in the Academic Listening class. Because the material and exercises provided by the lecturer make me accustomed to listening to audio listening and also from the material and tips given by the lecturer are very helpful when doing exercises and tests, for example, such as tips for taking notes that are useful when listening to audio.
> (Participant NE, interview, translated by the researcher)

Additionally, participants ML and GM added that teacher explanation plays an important part in their success in their Academic Listening class:

> Excerpt 2:
> Because the materials are given regularly according to the class syllabus. So, we are not confused by the material that is given by the lecturer. Also, the teachers are not just giving written material but also there are some exercises that are provided by the teachers. Not only giving materials, while having an online meeting the teacher explains the material very well.
> (Participant AN, interview)
> Excerpt 3:
> The material and explanations given by the lecturer are very clear and easy to understand so we just do the exercises and listen to the audio.
> (Participant GM, interview, translated by the researcher)

The participants' answers about the importance of teacher explanation in Academic Listening class showed that teachers greatly impact students' success. According to Meşe & Sevilen (2021) in their research about factors influencing EFL students' motivation in online learning. It has been reported that class teachers have affected students' motivation in online education. It was revealed in the study that participants' extrinsic motivation was largely dependent on teacher-related factors. Participants mentioned teaching methods, presentation of lessons, feedback, and teacher interaction as issues. Next, teachers should be more enthusiastic about building students' motivation to learn when explaining the material in online classes. Being an enthusiastic teacher while explaining the materials also helps the students be more motivated in class. As Dewaele & Li, (2021) mentioned in their research, learning, and achievement are improved by enthusiastic teaching that motivates, inspires, and excites learners.

Choosing listening material is also important to help students pass their academic listening course. Providing interesting topics and making fun activities help the students to improve their listening skills. However, in their research, Bailey and Lee (2020) also said that students' academic performance is influenced by online classes' teaching strategies and activities. As a participant mentioned in the interview session:

> Excerpt 4:
> The recordings given by the lecturer have each topic and each topic is interesting to listen to. That's why we can enjoy doing the material and follow the activities and tasks very well. (Participant ML, interview)

On the other hand, participant JJ also agrees that providing interesting and varied exercises help her to get good grades in the Academic Listening class. Participant JJ said:

> Excerpt 5:
> The practice provided is varied and interesting. so, we get used to listening and also practice doing exercises and make my listening skills improve and also get good grades.
> (Participant JJ, interview, translated by the researcher)

Nevertheless, besides the teacher's explanation about the materials chosen by the teacher, most participants also add that teacher motivation is needed in Academic Listening classes. Oko's (2014) research states that a teacher's motivation can increase students' desire to learn. So, they can feel free to express themself and participate in classroom activities. One of the interview participants also shared her experiences of teachers' motivation in helping to pass the Academic Listening class successfully:

> Excerpt 6:
> Factors that helped me pass and get good grades in the Academic Listening Class were the lecturers who were very motivating. Every Zoom meeting we were given support from the lecturer to pass and get good grades.
> (Participant JJ, interview, translated by the researcher)

Teacher roles in the classroom significantly impact students' success attributions. Not only giving interesting materials and activities. Teachers also should give some motivation or encouragement to the students. Sometimes, short motivation can significantly impact the students and make them feel appreciated for their effort. The role of the lecturer is one of the essential things that can benefit students from the courses (Nurani & Widiati, 2021). In conclusion, based on the participants' responses, teacher roles are crucial in helping students succeed in the Online Academic Listening class. Teacher explanations and motivation greatly impact students' understanding and motivation to learn. Choosing interesting and varied materials and activities also plays a significant role in improving students' listening skills. It is important for teachers to be enthusiastic and provide motivation to students, which can significantly impact their success in the course. Overall, the role of the teacher is essential in creating a positive learning environment and helping students achieve their goals.

Students' Self-Efficacy and Self-Motivation

The second success attributions are students' self-efficacy and motivation. Self-efficacy and self-motivation are internal factors that help students to succeed in their online Academic Listening class. This result also aligns with Thompson et al. (2019) research which found that self-concept, self-efficacy, and motivational self-constructs may directly influence students' performance in class. Self-efficacy is needed in listening class. According to Graham (2011), self-efficacy means "individuals' belief in their capacity to achieve specific tasks, which is held to have a strong influence on levels of persistence and the choices individuals make regarding which activities to pursue" (p.3). On the other hand, self-motivation is also needed to push students to gain good grades. Self-motivation can be one of the students' success attributions because by having motivation, students will be willing to work harder to gain a good score in the classroom activity. According to Yang (2011), in her research on Korean university students, English learning motivation is related to their English listening proficiency. She stated, "the feeling of pleasure or satisfaction from the actual learning process is assumed to become a motive and finally affect their success in English learning" (p. 94). It is important if the students have motivation. As a result, some interview participants also mentioned the importance of self-efficacy and motivation in Academic Listening classes as well:

Excerpt 7:
The factors that help me to succeed in online Academic Listening class are self motivation and persistence that help me to keep going and do every assignment and task in online Academic Listening class even though I faced difficulties in doing the task and listening to the recordings. And I also have this statement that helps me to keep going: "It would be even more difficult if I have to repeat this class". So, I motivate myself to do my best in class.
(Participant ML, interview)
Excerpt 8:
For the internal, I have to put my mind to work on the assignments and exercises. And also motivate myself to do the assignments.
(Participant AN, interview)
Excerpt 9:
Then, there is the self-motivation of wanting to get good grades and pass the Academic Listening class well.
(Participant JJ, interview, translated by the researcher)

The interview results show that students have enough self-efficacy and motivation. If they have this motivation, it is easier for them to gain good grades in Academic Listening classes, especially online ones. It also supports by NE's statement in the interview session:
Excerpt 10:
Factors that influence success are having time to practice outside of class hours to listen to audio with different accents and so get used to listening to audio listening with different accents and speeds.
(Participant NE, interview, translated by the researcher)

The participants' answers show that having enough self-efficacy and motivation significantly impacts success. On the other hand, research has consistently shown that it considerably impacts learning outcomes. A stronger sense of self-efficacy and motivation leads to higher levels of achievement and a greater willingness to face challenges and exert effort. As a teacher, we also can help students to gain motivation by providing positive learning experiences, enjoyable environments, fun and doable classroom activities, or even giving some rewards (e.g. certificates, points, etc.) to boost their motivation to participate in classroom activities actively (Akhter, 2020; Ivone & Renandya, 2019; Yang, 2011).

Supportive Learning Environment

The third success attribution in Academic Listening class is an appropriate learning environment. According to Buck's (2001) and Nguyen's (2020) research results, affective factors have greatly affected students' listening comprehension, such as students' learning environment and conditions. Suryanto et al. (2021) also added that other attributions for the student's success in an Academic Listening course are related to a supportive learning environment. It is essential for the students to have an appropriate learning environment, especially while having an online class. The biggest problem that students face while having online learning is the situation at their house, the unstable internet connection. As stated by Meşe and Sevilen (2021) in their research, they found that "the environment where students take online classes was considered inappropriate by two participants. 'Noise' and 'siblings' were mentioned and they said that they 'needed a calm environment' to concentrate on their lessons" (p.19) as what NE conveyed in the interview.
Excerpt 11:
The challenges I faced when joining the Academic Listening class were the unstable internet connection and the environment, which sometimes made the audio material unclear. (Participant NE, interview, translated by the researcher)

Clearly, having an appropriate learning environment is needed to help students succeed in online classes. As said by Selvi (2021) in their study, "the motivating factors of online courses are related to "online learning environment/technical infrastructure" (p.822). So, students need to have preparation and coordination before joining online classes. The learning environment is not just about the environment or technical things. Having a supportive learning environment also means students can easily discuss their listening difficulties in class with classmates and teachers without any judgment (Novita et al., 2022). This is also in line with Martin and Bolliger's (2018) study that "an interactive and cohesive environment, including group work and instructive feedback, is important for student engagement resulting in learning success" (p. 208). In conclusion, the environment is one of the impactful factors that help students succeed. Not only preparing a conducive environment and conditions such as a quiet place with excellent internet connection, but also providing students with a supportive learning environment that makes them feel comfortable to have a discussion.

The Benefits of Technology in an Online Academic Listening Class

Last, the factor that helps students in online academic listening class is the benefits of technologies in online class activities. Due to Covid-19 Pandemic, all kinds of activities were supported by online applications, and many applications were used to help students to keep learning in an online classroom. Mostly, the applications used for this online learning are video conferencing applications such as Zoom Meeting, Google Meeting, etc., and Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as Schoology, Google Classroom, and FLearn. According to Ubaedillah and Pratiwi (2021)Klik atau ketuk di sini untuk memasukkan teks., the digital technologies applied in online English classes have improved students' scores. There are some reasons why technology is so beneficial for students to help them get good scores in online learning. First, the technology or applications are easy to use and access. As explained by Revere and Kovach (2011) in their research about online technologies that engage learning, some applications used in online learning, such as Google application, Web-based, Audio, and Video technologies, are easy to use, adaptable, and accessible, as admitted in the interview.

> Excerpt 12:
> I think the media can support me in Academic listening class because the media are easy to use. For a Schoology app, it really helps me because it is an all in one application. So, it not just helps the teacher to share the material, but we can also do the tasks, assignments and tests in one application without switching to another application to do different jobs. (Participant ML, interview)
> Excerpt 13:
> The media used are YouTube and Schoology for the material. The media used is very helpful for online learning in Academic Listening class, because the media used makes it easier for students to access and do exercises or assignments given by lecturers.
> (Participant GM, interview, translated by the researcher)
> Excerpt 14:
> The media is easy to use and supports online learning in doing and working on each assignment or task in Academic Listening class. For the Schoology app, it was pretty accessible for the students and we can access it anytime that we want.
> (Participant AN, interview)

Second, the technology used, especially video conferencing applications such as Zoom Meeting, Google meeting, etc., helps students understand the material better and interact with the lecturer. Even though the lecture cannot be conducted via face-to-face meetings, it does not prevent the students from interacting with the lecturer. This statement might show that technology is beneficial not only for students but also for teachers themselves. At

the same time, teachers also succeed in using technologies to teach students through online activities. Consistent with Nurani and Widiati's (2021) statements, "a lecturer successfully develops an online learning method, strategy, and materials for students. Additionally, a lecturer could use online listening applications or technological devices" (p.136). Nevertheless, student NE shared her experiences in the online classroom. It can be described in this transcription:

> Excerpt 15:
> The media used is quite helpful in the academic listening class because with the online meeting, students understand the material better and feel like two-way communication. Then, students can also discuss difficulties, problems and can immediately get feedback or tips from the lecturer. (Participant NE, interview, translated by the researcher)

It is shown that technology benefits students, especially in listening classes. The data might indicate that using technology can help students gain a good score and pass the course because the technology is easy to use and accessible. That said, the students can easily do their tasks and assignments from their teachers. Next, technology helps students to understand better by having online meetings with the lecturer. These two points showed that technology also affects students' success in online learning.

The findings show factors that significantly impact students' success attributions in Academic listening Classes that are divided into two main factors, the internal factors (e.g. Student's self-efficacy and motivation) and the external factors (e.g. the useful materials given by the lecture). This study emphasizes the idea of achieving success in Academic Listening classes. It is not enough to seek and improve the skills from one factor. These findings relate to Cheng et al. (2021) seeking students' attribution that impacts subjects' learning mood and motivation to achieve successful learning.

Furthermore, the success attributions that the researcher found from the interview session transcript data, were consistent with the previous research about success attributions in Academic Listening class, such as self-motivation and efficacy, lecture comprehension, final grades, English proficiency, vocabulary knowledge and academic listening comprehension (Rose et al., 2019; Thompson et al., 2019; Nguyen, 2021). These findings indicate the factors that make students reach improvements and succeed in Academic Listening class. The findings also help the lecturer improve their teaching methods and inspire the lecture to help the students succeed in Academic Listening class.

CONCLUSIONS

This study aims to answer the following question: *What are the attributions for the student's success in an online Academic Listening class?* In conclusion, the researcher revealed four main attributions that helped the students succeed in their online Academic Listening classes. These findings suggest four implications that can be used to help students and teachers gain success in an online Academic Listening class. First, Teacher's roles in online classrooms. Teacher roles significantly impact students' success attributions. Not only giving interesting materials and activities, teachers should also give some motivation or encouragement for the students to succeed.

Second, Students' self-efficacy and motivation. Having enough self-efficacy and motivation impacts students' success. On the other hand, a stronger sense of self-efficacy and encouragement lead to higher levels of achievement and a greater willingness to face challenges and exert effort. As a teacher, we can also help students gain motivation by

providing positive learning experiences, enjoyable environments, and fun and doable classroom activities to boost their motivation to participate in classroom activities actively.

Third, Appropriate learning environment. An appropriate learning environment is needed to help students succeed in online classes. The learning environment is not just about the environment or technical things but also has a supportive learning environment means students can easily discuss their listening difficulties in class with classmates and teachers without any judgment

Last, The benefits of technology in an online academic listening class. The use of technology is beneficial for the students, especially in listening classes. Some prove that using technology can help students gain good scores and pass the course because the technology is easy to use and accessible.

From these research results, the researcher has some recommendations for EFL teaching and learning practices in similar listening classes. Potentials of technology should be maximized more in the class both by the lecturer and the students to support their listening practices. Teachers should also work on maintaining a positive and supportive classroom atmosphere in their listening classrooms so that they can also take a role in enhancing students' motivation in their class.

There are some limitations of the present study which have to be admitted. This study only focuses on success attributions in an online Academic Listening class; there is no detailed explanation or suggested activities for the face-to-face course to lead students to achieve their success. Future researchers should follow up this study by conducting research in similar classes held in face-to-face or hybrid settings and compare the findings with those presented in this study. Further researchers can also interview students in similar settings to detail other possible attributions that help them to succeed. Other research data collection procedures might also be used to obtain richer data about students' success attribution in Academic listening class. Finally, these topics might be interesting to explore by future researchers: the attributions for the students' success in a hybrid/face-to-face Academic Listening class and the possible technology tools that can help to improve students' listening skills and help them succeed in their Academic Listening classes. The use of technology is beneficial for the students, especially in listening classes. Some prove that using technology can help students gain good scores and pass the course because the technology is easy to use and accessible.

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attribution in Academic listening class. Finally, these topics might be interesting to explore by future researchers: the attributions for the students' success in a hybrid/face-to-face Academic Listening class and the possible technology tools that can help to improve students' listening skills and help them succeed in their Academic Listening classes.

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