



DIGITAL-BASED LISTENING MATERIALS IN THE MERDEKA CURRICULUM: A NARRATIVE REVIEW

MATERI MENYIMAK BERBASIS DIGITAL DALAM KURIKULUM MERDEKA: TINJAUAN NARATIF

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Article Info

Article history :

Received : 05-12-2025

Revised : 06-12-2025

Accepted : 08-12-2025

Published : 10-12-2025

Abstrak

Ulasan naratif ini mengkaji penggunaan bahan menyimak berbasis digital dalam Kurikulum Merdeka di Indonesia. Kemampuan mendengarkan adalah kemampuan dasar dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, tapi tetap menjadi tantangan bagi para pelajar bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL) sebab minimnya penjelasan terhadap konteks yang asli. Tinjauan ini menggunakan metode naratif review, mengkaji artikel atau jurnal yang dipublikasikan sejak tahun 2021 - 2025 yang membahas tentang media digital dalam pembelajaran serta pengajaran kemampuan menyimak. Temuan - temuan melaporkan bahwa Podcast, Audio-Video, platform YouTube, aplikasi AR/VR, dan lembar kerja digital yang berhubungan dengan audio secara luas dimanfaatkan untuk mengembangkan pemahaman menyimak yang mendalam. Materi-materi ini menyediakan masukan yang kredibel, akses fleksibel, pengalaman multimodal, serta mendukung pendekatan berpusat pada siswa dalam Kurikulum Merdeka. Namun, beberapa tantangan masih ada, termasuk kesiapan pengajar dalam memanfaatkan bahan ajar melalui alat digital, konten budaya lokal yang minim, dan hubungan yang kurang mencukupi dengan penilaian formatif. Umumnya, sumber daya menyimak berbasis digital efektif dalam mengembangkan pemaknaan sesuai konteks, pemikiran mendalam, sejalan dengan penegasan kurikulum pada kreativitas, kemandirian, dan kompetensi abad ke-21. Penelitian masa depan harus fokus pada pelatihan guru, adaptasi budaya, dan integrasi penilaian untuk memaksimalkan potensi materi mendengarkan digital.

Kata Kunci : EFL; Kurikulum Merdeka; Materi menyimak digital

Abstract

This narrative review examines the use of digital listening materials in the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia. The Merdeka Curriculum is implemented to fulfill 21st-century learning guidelines in terms of material effectiveness, flexibility, and graduate profile confirmation. Listening skills are fundamental in English language learning, but remain a challenge for students of English as a foreign language (EFL) due to the lack of explanation of the original context. This review uses a narrative review method, examining articles or journals published between 2021 and 2025 that discuss digital media in learning and teaching listening skills. The findings report that podcasts, audio-video, YouTube platforms, AR/VR applications, and digital worksheets related to audio are widely used to develop in-depth listening comprehension. These materials provide credible input, flexible access, multimodal experiences, and support a student-centered approach in the Merdeka Curriculum. However, several challenges remain, including teacher readiness in utilizing teaching materials through digital tools, a lack of local cultural content, and insufficient links to formative assessment. In general, digital-based listening resources are effective in developing context-appropriate meaning-making and deep thinking, in line with the curriculum's emphasis on creativity, independence, and 21st-century competencies.



Future research should focus on teacher training, cultural adaptation, and assessment integration to maximize the potential of listening materials.

Keywords: Digital listening materials; EFL; Merdeka Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

Listening is a crucial part of the English learning process for non-native speakers (EFL) (Alzamil, 2021). These skills help students understand vocabulary and language structure, while also serving as a foundation for speaking and reading. The amount of vocabulary learned can play an important role in the listening process, as limited language will hinder comprehension. In Indonesia, listening comprehension learning is still challenging because opportunities to use English in everyday life are limited (Izzah & Keeya, 2019). Appropriate listening teaching methods and pedagogical strategies (e.g., repeated practice, media integration, teaching listening strategies) are important to help students overcome obstacles in listening comprehension (Hadijah, 2018). Therefore, the development of appropriate and effective listening teaching materials is urgently needed.

Digital technology plays an important role in language learning by supporting collaborative creativity among students (Selfa-Sastre et al., 2022). Through various online platforms and interactive media, students can interact in real time, experiment with language, and work on joint projects that require creative thinking. The use of digital technology in language learning enables students to develop 21st-century skills, particularly creativity and collaboration, through interactive projects and collaborative learning environments that facilitate collective creative thinking (Selfa-Sastre et al., 2022).

The educational context in Indonesia is currently undergoing significant transformation through the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, which aims to provide greater flexibility for teachers and students in designing the learning process so as to support the development of students' critical thinking, creativity, and independence skills (Hunaepi & Suharta, 2024). In addition, the implementation of this curriculum also emphasizes strengthening students' character, including independence, responsibility, and the ability to work together, through a more participatory and project-based learning approach (Ndari et al., 2023). With this flexibility, schools in Indonesia can tailor learning methods, media, and strategies to the needs of students, so that this transformation not only improves academic achievement but also shapes holistic competencies relevant to the demands of 21st-century education.

This narrative review article aims to examine the results of studies related to digital-based listening materials in the Merdeka Curriculum, focusing on the types of sources used. The urgency of this review is even greater considering that a number of recent studies have confirmed that digital media plays an important role in creating a more interactive and accessible listening learning experience. Thus, this review is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the developments, potential, opportunities, and aspects that still require further exploration in the development of digital-based listening materials. In line with these objectives, this review aims to answer the following two research questions: 1) what types of digital-based listening materials have been used in research related to the Merdeka Curriculum, and 2) what aspects or areas still require further exploration in the development of digital-based listening materials.



METHODS

This study uses a narrative review method to identify and summarize journal articles relevant to the use of digital-based listening materials in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum. Articles were collected through Google Scholar, limited to English-language publications between 2021 and 2025, with a focus on digital-based listening materials in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum. The selection of articles was based on inclusion criteria, including: 1) articles discussing digital media in English language learning, particularly listening skills; 2) articles highlighting the impact, effectiveness, or implementation of digital media use in the learning process; 3) articles published between 2021 and 2025; and 4) articles written in English.

Meanwhile, articles that did not meet the above criteria, were not relevant to the topic being studied, or did not provide data relevant to the research objectives were excluded based on exclusion criteria.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The literature review in this study was conducted to describe the various types of digital listening teaching materials used in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, as well as to explore areas that still need further exploration in the development of these teaching materials. The literature collection process was carried out through accredited sites such as Google Scholar and relevant databases, with publications ranging from 2021 to 2025.

From the research results, several articles and journals relevant to the topic were collected and selected based on predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The selection was carried out in stages, starting with an initial explanation of the number of relevant publications, followed by a selection process based on the suitability of the topic, method, and research focus on digital listening teaching materials in the Merdeka Curriculum.

The results of the analysis of previous studies are reported in this section, which focuses on two issues: 1) what types of digital-based listening materials have been used in research related to the Merdeka Curriculum, and 2) what aspects or areas still require further exploration in the development of digital-based listening materials.

Tabel 1. Articles for Review

Researchers	Title	Year	Types of Digital-Based Listening Material and Developed Aspects	Sources
(Macasandag et al., 2025)	Podcast-Based Learning as a Strategy for Improving English Listening Skills	2025	Podcast-based learning: listening comprehension, learner autonomy, motivation	https://doi.org/10.9734/ajess/2025/v51i51973
(Waziana & Andewi, 2024)	Using English Digital Learning Media to Support the Implementation of the Curriculum Merdeka	2024	Digital learning media (multiplatform): curriculum implementation support, listening exposure, digital literacy	https://doi.org/10.52657/js.v10i2.2303



(Songsienghai et al., 2023)	Implementing Augmented Reality (AR) for Improving EFL Students' English Listening Skills	2023	Augmented Reality (AR)-based listening media: listening comprehension, engagement, contextual understanding	https://share.google/D06QSfdOMTU8MPJrS
(Nurhuda & Wahyuni, 2024)	Development of Web-Based Indonesian Teaching Materials on Listening Materials for Grade X High School Level	2024	Web-based listening instructional materials: listening comprehension, material accessibility, independent learning	https://sciejournal.com/index.php/SiLeT
(Zhafira et al., 2024)	Pre-service EFL Teachers' Readiness for Using ICT-based Media in Listening: A Survey on Higher Education Students	2024	ICT-based listening media: teachers' readiness, digital competence, pedagogical awareness	https://doi.org/10.24042/ee-jtbi.v17i1.19972
(Unun Pratiwi et al., 2025)	Transforming Indonesian Language Learning: Integrating Digital Literacy and Local Cultural Values In Elementary School Education	2025	Digitally integrated listening materials with local content: listening comprehension, digital literacy, cultural awareness	https://share.google/oE2hOiXCuzsEVH8k
(Slamet et al., 2024)	Developing an Online Formative Assessment Instrument for Listening Skill through LMS	2024	LMS-based online formative listening assessment: listening comprehension, assessment literacy, learner feedback	https://so04.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/LEARN/article/view/270382
(Ana Billa et al., 2024)	Learning Media Listening to Digital Models Loaded with Local Wisdom	2024	Digital listening media integrated with local wisdom: listening comprehension cultural awareness, character education	https://www.iscjournal.com/index.php/isce/article/view/266
(Septyanti et al., 2023)	Profile of The Needs for Digital-Based Listening Learning Media in Higher Education : Responding to The Challenges of 21st Century Learning	2023	Needs-based digital listening learning media: learner needs alignment, digital literacy, 21st-century skills	https://doi.org/10.33394/jk.v9i4.8736
(Dewi Rakhmawati et al., 2023)	Utilizing English Videos as Listening Instructional Media to Promote EFL Students' Listening Proficiency	2023	English video-based listening instructional media: listening proficiency, motivation, authentic listening exposure	https://doi.org/10.30603/al.v8i1.3272



(Asrianti & Rosadi, 2024)	Strategies to Teach English as a Foreign Language in Merdeka Curriculum: A Systematic Literature Review	2024	Curriculum-oriented EFL teaching strategies (digital-supported): pedagogical competence, curriculum alignment, instructional strategy awareness	10.30595/pssh.v18i.1278
(Hunaepi & Suharta, 2024)	Transforming Education in Indonesia: The Impact and Challenges of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum	2024	Merdeka Curriculum-based digital learning transformation: curriculum implementation understanding, digital pedagogy awareness, educational innovation	https://doi.org/10.22178/pos.105-31
(Magtublo & Santoso, 2024)	Formation Capital Character Reason Critical on Subjects Pancasila in Schools Base Post Gen Z Based	2024	Digital learning materials integrating Pancasila values: critical thinking, character building, value-based learning	https://doi.org/10.29138/ijebd.v7i5.2900

Several digital-based materials are used as teaching materials in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, with a primary focus on English and Indonesian language learning. One of the most widely used media because of its flexibility and ability to provide authentic input that is in line with the context of real communication is podcasts (Macasandag et al., 2025). In addition, web-based media such as audio-video learning are also used to support listening comprehension, especially at the junior high and high school levels (Waziana & Andewi, 2024). There are also research findings (Songsiengchai et al., 2023) reporting that YouTube platforms and AR/VR-based media have begun to be used in several studies as an effort to provide contextual and multimodal listening experiences. Another study reported that digital worksheets combined with audio have been used to support listening comprehension learning materials in the classroom (Nurhuda & Wahyuni, 2024). Therefore, this medium is categorized as effective in helping students explore the content of audio through competency-based exercises in the Merdeka Curriculum.

Although the use of digital media in listening comprehension learning is growing, there are several aspects that still need further development. First, teachers' readiness to adapt to digital media that is not yet widespread, especially in areas with limited access to technology (Zhafira et al., 2024). Second, there is a lack of local content, even though the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes the relationship between the Indonesian context and culture in learning (Unun Pratiwi et al., 2025). Third, there are few studies discussing the integration of digital listening teaching materials with formative assessment, so the success of developing listening skills has not been structured (Slamet et al., 2024).

In language acquisition, listening is not simply the act of hearing sounds; it is the active process of absorbing, understanding, and interpreting spoken information. Because listening skills foster the development of other language skills and understanding contextual meaning, they are a crucial foundation (Ana Billa et al., 2024). The authors argue that active student participation through media and activities that illustrate the contexts in which language is actually used is essential for effective listening instruction. As a result, the use of appropriate learning materials helps children develop focus, understanding of meaning, and communication skills, as well as



helping them understand the content of conversations. This method transforms learning from a passive process into one that is engaging, meaningful, and relevant to students' needs. Because it can deliver content multimodally and interactively, digital-based listening instruction is considered a relevant strategy for addressing language acquisition difficulties in the digital age. To encourage active student engagement and enhance understanding of the contextual meaning of an utterance, digital listening media can combine audio, video, animation, and interactive activities (Ana Billa et al., 2024). Furthermore, the use of digital models offers learning flexibility by allowing students to access resources at any time and modify them according to their learning needs and preferences. Thus, listening instruction is no longer confined to the classroom (Ana Billa et al., 2024). These results are consistent with the findings of a study on the need for listening media in higher education, which showed that interactive media with meaningful content, communicative language, supportive graphic displays, and materials that can be used for repeated and independent listening practice are the best forms of digital-based listening materials (Septyanti et al., 2023). Digital listening resources should be viewed as educational tools that can enhance independent learning, foster critical listening skills, and connect listening activities to students' cultural and real-world settings, rather than simply as a way to use technology. To make listening instruction more efficient, relevant, and engaging, the creation of digital listening resources must balance language, technology, and learning objectives.

The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes learning flexibility, the development of basic skills, and the development of student independence and character, particularly in language acquisition. In this context, language learning focuses on communicative, contextual, and relevant language skills tailored to students' needs and learning experiences, rather than solely studying linguistic content (Dewi Rakhmawati et al., 2023). In addition, Merdeka Curriculum allows teachers to modify language learning techniques, materials, and strategies to suit students' skills, interests, and backgrounds, making teaching more individualized and applicable to everyday situations. This method requires the use of cutting-edge educational resources, especially digital resources, which can facilitate learner-centered, interactive, and active language acquisition (Asrianti & Rosadi, 2024). Digital media offers the flexibility and freedom of learning that children need in the Merdeka Curriculum, as well as the ability to integrate a variety of language skills, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Septyanti et al., 2023). For students to understand language meaningfully, language acquisition—especially listening skills—requires media that can offer realistic and contextual learning experiences (Ana Billa et al., 2024). According to the authors, teachers' creativity in using digital media and creating learning opportunities that not only improve language proficiency but also encourage students' independence, critical thinking, and cultural awareness plays a crucial role in the success of language learning in the Merdeka Curriculum.

The core principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, which prioritize learner-centered learning, flexible learning, and the development of 21st-century competencies, align with the use of digital-based listening resources. According to (Hunaepi & Suharta, 2024), the Independent Curriculum offers instructors the opportunity to use digital technology as a contextual and relevant language learning medium, particularly in developing listening skills. Listening is now viewed in language acquisition as an active process involving understanding context, meaning, and real-world language use. Digital media, including audio, video, and interactive listening learning apps, have been shown to offer more authentic and engaging listening experiences, thereby increasing student motivation



and engagement (Dewi Rakhmawati et al., 2023). These findings are consistent with research which highlights how digital-based listening materials can enhance the educational process and help students understand spoken language in context (Ana Billa et al., 2024). Furthermore, the Merdeka Curriculum requires the use of technology to enable diverse and autonomous learning, which can be made possible by adaptive and widely available digital listening resources (Magtublo & Santoso, 2024). Integrating digital listening media into the Merdeka Curriculum not only helps students become more professional listeners but also fosters the development of their critical thinking, creativity, and digital literacy skills. This makes language learning more relevant to global demands while remaining within the national educational framework.

Despite being a crucial component of language acquisition, listening skills are often considered the most challenging for foreign language learners, according to previous research. Speech rate, pronunciation, limited vocabulary, and a lack of supporting context in listening materials are the main causes of listening difficulties, which lead to poor comprehension of spoken communication (Alzamil, 2021). Consequently, several studies have highlighted the need for educational materials that enable students to understand language in a more contextual and meaningful way. Because it allows for multimodal content presentation through a combination of audio and graphics, the use of digital listening media is considered successful, as it can increase student motivation and comprehension (Ana Billa et al., 2024; Dewi Rakhmawati et al., 2023).

Additionally, prior studies have shown that digital-based listening resources are pertinent to the Independent Curriculum's language learning requirements, which prioritize adaptability, self-directed learning, and learner-centered learning. Through interactive and contextual activities, digital listening media enables students to actively participate in the learning process, modify their learning speed, and access resources on their own (Hunaepi & Suharta, 2024; Septyanti et al., 2023). Furthermore, incorporating contextual and cultural materials into digital listening media has been shown to enhance students' cultural understanding and identity while making learning more relevant (Ana Billa et al., 2024; Hunaepi & Suharta, 2024). Overall, previous research suggests that the effective use of digital listening resources largely depends on appropriate pedagogical design, the appropriateness of the content to the curriculum context, and teachers' readiness to utilize technology optimally.

CONCLUSION

Based on the review results, it was concluded that digital-based listening materials play an important role in supporting English language learning in the Merdeka Curriculum. Media such as podcasts, audio-video, YouTube, AR/VR, and digital worksheets are effective in providing a more interactive, flexible, and authentic learning experience. These materials not only develop listening skills but also hone students' independence, creativity, and critical thinking skills in line with the emphasis on 21st-century skills. However, there are still challenges in terms of teacher readiness, lack of local content, and limited integration with formative assessment. Therefore, further research and development should be directed at developing teacher readiness, expanding locally-based content, and implementing relevant assessments so that digital listening materials can be optimally utilized in the Merdeka Curriculum.



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