



## Students' Experiences with Discord-Supported Critical Listening Instruction

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### ABSTRACT

The increasing popularity of the internet has prompted people to embrace digital platforms for language acquisition. Language environments currently exist in both classrooms and virtual spaces. Therefore, listening skills, which are an important feature of language proficiency, especially in higher education, can be taught through a medium called Discord as a new and useful digital learning tool. The primary aim is to dig further the students' voices to enhance listening proficiency skills. To gather this meaningful data, descriptive qualitative design involves the instruments of classroom observation checklist, field notes, and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Additionally, this study focused on the 20 students enrolled in the International Class Program at Maulana Malik Ibrahim Islamic State University Malang. The findings revealed that Discord facilitates the systematic materials, allow features for supporting offline and online class, design the new interactive educational agendas, and immediate response in Discord facilitates dynamic discussions.

**Keywords:** Discord; medium learning; critical listening course

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## INTRODUCTION

Listening skills, a crucial aspect of language proficiency, hold immense importance, particularly in the context of higher education. Brent and Anderson's research in 1993, which suggests that approximately 80% of knowledge acquisition is associated to listening, underscoring the significance of this skill. As students' progress to higher levels of education, such as college, a transition towards more critical listening becomes challenging. Critical listening is a complex activity where the students not only have to comprehend the message but should also evaluate the credibility of the speaker, interpret the context, and judge the message for accuracy and reliability (Thompson et al., 2004). The importance of critical listening included the development of other language skills such as speaking, reading, and writing because they are all wholly related to listening.

However, in the practice, scholars reveal that experts have labeled listening as both "neglected" and "forgotten," the impact of neglecting the listening skills, it may impact the development of others language skill, decrease learning outcomes, and need to reevaluate teaching

practices (Yumira, 2019). A viewpoint supported by prior studies of Ghaderpanahi (2012) and Nowrouzi et al. (2015). This negligence of listening skills at the tertiary level is also found in the research of Abedin et al. (2010), Ardhanay and Handini (2019), and Hardiyanto et al. (2021). The practical learning of critical listening skills shows that students are served the social issue related to the learning outcomes and they evaluate the speaker's message, extract key details, and convey their own arguments. Regarding this, most lecturers use extensive listening video and audio to discuss in the classroom since there are no prepared materials by experts in the listening course (Septyanti & Kurniaman, 2019). Nonetheless, this approach raises obstacles. Students may exhibit reluctance to actively participate in a real classroom setting, face poorly organized materials, may shy away from asking critical questions, or may prefer not to be the center of attention. Furthermore, they might become confused by the content of the materials provided. Compounding the issue is the fact that traditional listening textbooks often fall short of providing the necessary support for critical listening materials.

In response to these challenges, the educational field has witnessed a significant rise in the use of digital learning tools (Duc, 2020). This trend is evident through the growing number of educators and researchers who are exploring the benefits of integrating modern digital learning components into their teaching practices (Illiana & Kay, 202; Prott & Ebner, 2020). By integrating the power of digital learning tools, educators can design the interactive learning experiences and foster students' motivation and engagement. In a critical listening course, these innovative tools become crucial as educators use them to make the display of listening skills more captivating and enjoyable in a fun setting. The challenges in critical listening course need highly the specific innovative learning tools to address the issues. By incorporating such innovative learning tools, the teaching of Critical Listening aims to become more engaging, effective, and inspiring for students. The recent digital tool which offers complete features and fulfills educators' needs is Discord.

Discord is familiar tool as game fans, already used the application for everyday communication. Discord is a free messenger with support for IP telephony and video conferencing, as well as the possibility to create public and private chats for exchanging text and voice messages. This platform was originally created for gamers to communicate while playing games. Now it has acquired new functionalities and has become a place where people of similar interests can communicate with each other on various topics (Odinokaya et al., 2021). In educational context, Discord emerges as a potential tool for blended learning (Arifianto & Izzudin, 2021), it serves as an asynchronous discussion forum, enabling students to engage in meaningful discussions even when not in real-time contact. Discord is easy to use, provides real-time

communication, facilitates audio and video streaming, allows screen sharing, provides multi-platform support, offers easy registration, provides access to various communities, and is free, programmable, and automated (Vladoiu & Constantinescu, 2020). It allows educators and students to create separate servers for different groups of students and multiple channels for different purposes (Squire, 2021; Wahyuningsih & Baidi, 2021). Discord also enables students to keep in touch with peers, discuss assignments, catch up, hold video conferences, and clarify any unclear lesson (Baber, 2021; Squire, 2021). In the context of listening skills, Discord proves to be an indispensable platform. Educators can efficiently share course materials, assignments, and various resources. To ensure systematic arrangement, the educator can create distinct channels for different subjects or topics, maintaining a structured repository for students to access. As the conversation and video conference media are applicable for fulfilling students' needs, Discord also has a completely free application that does not contain hidden payments or premium subscriptions (Gorbatuc & Dudka, 2019), It is very important in the economic situation of the state. In addition, Discord excels in supporting simultaneous communication within large user groups, a feature that sets it apart from other platforms, which often rely on asynchronous communication and necessitate the creation of numerous interconnected servers to facilitate training within a single course, stream, or educational institution.

Several studies, including those by Ardiyansah et al. (2021), Odinokaya et al. (2021), and Wahyuningsih and Baidi (2021), have provided evidence supporting the effectiveness of Discord as a digital platform for online teaching and learning. Further research conducted by Zannah et al. (2022) reinforces these findings by demonstrating that Discord can facilitate more efficient and effective connections between teachers and students in an online learning environment. The study highlights how the attractiveness of Discord as a medium for online learning positively influences students' interest and motivation, particularly when teachers adopt a supportive attitude during the learning process. These findings underscore the compatibility and coherence between Discord and educational settings, indicating its potential to enhance the overall teaching and learning experience in the digital realm. The effectiveness of Discord in educational contexts, as highlighted by Wulanjani's (2018) research, is further supported by their study. They found that incorporating Discord into listening courses can significantly enhance students' enthusiasm and enjoyment. One key factor contributing to Discord's effectiveness in the listening class is its ability to provide a wide range of multimedia content. Within Discord, teachers can utilize text, voice, and video channels to present audio and visual materials directly to students, thereby enriching the listening exercises and creating a more immersive learning environment. By integrating various forms of media within the same platform, Discord simplifies the process for both teachers and students,

eliminating the need to switch between multiple apps or platforms. This seamless integration enhances coherence, promotes a smoother learning experience, and makes Discord become a preferable app than the others.

However, the researcher found a similar pattern that numerous studies have attempted to investigate the effectiveness of Discord (Anwar et al., 2022; Castillo-Cuesta & Quinonez-Beltran, 2022; Odiokaya et al., 2021; Mashud et al., 2021; Zannah et al., 2022). The comparison study about Discord with others familiar digital learning tool (Vonog et al., 2021), perspective on speaking (Anwar et al., 2022; Sartika et al., 2022, perspective on listening skills (Wulanjani, 2018). The current researchers are less attention on portraying the students' voices of the implementation of Discord in higher education level in Islamic setting. Based on the researcher's review, there is no study that focusses on the Discord's implementation in critical listening courses at International Class Program (ICP). Regarding this huge gap, as an education stakeholder and observer in the ELT area, this commonly typifies a noticeable guarantee of successful learning among the listening class. As such, a need to dig more into the implementation of Discord is urgent. Without a resolution to these challenges, uncertainty continues to hinder both students and educators in delivering an effective Critical Listening course. Therefore, further investigation is necessary to reveal students' voices about the implementation of Discord on the students' listening proficiency skill in critical listening course at Maulana Malik Ibrahim Islamic State University Malang.

## **METHOD**

This study used a descriptive qualitative research design. It was chosen as the methodological technique for this research because the subsequent analysis in providing a full representation of Discord's implementation and gathering valuable data from students' voices on how Discord is implemented in this context. This research was conducted among students enrolled in the English Education Department at Maulana Malik Ibrahim Islamic State University Malang during the academic year 2024/2025. The specific setting for this study was the ICP (International Class Program) classroom, where Discord was employed as a digital learning tool throughout an entire semester in a critical listening class with 20 students. The choice of the ICP classroom setting was based on its unique status as a relatively new initiative at Maulana Malik Ibrahim Islamic State University Malang, especially in English Education department. Discord was the first application introduced as the main application, aside from e-Learning to enhance the learning experience within this program. Additionally, it is important to note that the implementation of Discord in the ICP classroom was novel in this academic context, as it had been previously utilized for communication with students engaged in gaming activities. This innovative approach was adopted

to maximize the use of digital tools for enhancing critical listening skills and was a key of uniqueness aspect in this study.

The data was collected from Focus Group Discussion (FGD), classroom observation and interview. The researcher adapted the indicators from the study of Ardiansyah et al.'s (2021) instrument. These indicators consist of contents or features, interface, feedback & interaction, students' performance, communication process, and interactivity. To align with the specific research context and objectives, the researcher subsequently refined and developed these indicators into the following seven categories; content, feature, educational experience, feedback and interactions, student's progress and performance, interactivity, and possible drawback. These categories allowed for a comprehensive information of Discord's implementation in critical listening course. The researcher distributed seven questions. Additionally, the instruments used in this study were previously validated and approved by experts in the field, ensuring the research instrument's robustness and reliability.

### The Blueprint of the Focus Group Discussion

The Indicators of Focus Group Discussion		
Indicator	Description	List Questions for Students
Content	This indicator refers to the educational materials, resources, and information that lecturer uses to teach their courses.	What role do you feel <i>Discord</i> plays in helping you access and engage with course content and materials effectively?
Feature	Specific functionalities or capabilities within the <i>Discord</i> platform that have had a positive impact on the courses being discussed. It could be key elements or aspects of <i>Discord</i> that have played a significant role in enhancing the learning experience.	Are there particular <i>Discord</i> features or aspects that you find most helpful for your learning experience?
Educational Experience	A range of aspects and outcomes related to how <i>Discord</i> has influenced or contributed to the learning journey of students and the teaching methods.	Can you describe your experience with using <i>Discord</i> as part of your coursework or educational experience?
Feedback and interactions	Combining both aspects by acknowledging the role of feedback from the educational community (students, colleagues, etc.) and how those interactions have shaped the way <i>Discord</i> is	Do you feel that your instructors have made any adaptations or changes to their use of <i>Discord</i> based on student feedback or experiences?

	employed in the educational context.	
Student's Progress and Performance	The academic progress and achievements of students in a given course of <i>Discord</i> tool.	What specific improvements or changes have you observed in your learning environment or interactions with peers and instructors since the adoption of <i>Discord</i> ? How do these improvements align with your expectations for using <i>Discord</i> as an educational tool?
Interactivity	It examined the level of interactivity and engagement achieved through <i>Discord</i> in the context of critical listening skill development.	Could you share any illustration of how <i>Discord</i> has influenced your interaction with friends and lecturer?
Drawback	This category allows for the identification and exploration of challenges and drawbacks associated with using <i>Discord</i> .	Have you encountered any challenges or difficulties while using <i>Discord</i> or your studies?

After collecting the data, the researcher used the set of data analysis step by Creswell (2013), there are 6 steps of data analysis technique for qualitative research;

1. Organizing and Transcribing the Instruments' Results.

In this section the researchers obtained and organized all the raw data, such as; the results of field notes and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The various pictures and videos to support the findings were arranged, renamed, and sorted the data into different types depending on the sources of information to make the researcher access the data efficiently.

2. Processing and Preparing Data for Analysis.

After organizing the data systematically, the researchers prepared the data for conducting deep analysis. The analysis was based on the theory and the researchers used hand analysis of qualitative data, it means the researchers read the data, mark it by hand, and divide it into parts. It was addressed to be close to the data and have a hands-on feel for it without the intrusion of a machine.

3. Reading All the Data.

This step provides a general sense of the information and an opportunity to reflect on its overall meaning. The results of Focus Group Discussion were read and comprehended by the researchers. Reading the data several times assisted the researchers to recognize the mistake and irrelevant data.

4. Starting Coding All of The Data.

It is the process of segmenting and labeling text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data. Cresswell (2013) stated that there are no set guidelines for coding data, some general procedures were followed by the researchers, such as; read the transcripts several times, immerse the researchers' self in the details, and identify the categories.

5. Using the Coding Process to Generate a Themes and Description.

Describing and developing themes from the data consists of answering the major research questions and forming an in-depth understanding of the central phenomenon through description and thematic development. For description, the researchers provided detail information about people, places, or events in a setting in qualitative research.

6. Linking Themes and Description.

In this stage, the researchers connected the themes to display a chronology or sequence of events.

7. Making an Interpretation in Qualitative Research of The Findings or Results.

This phase involves the discussion and how the research question were answered, brief conclusion about the findings, limitation of the study, and suggestions for future research.

## FINDINGS

In this session, the researcher described the answer of question, students' perspective of Discord implementation. The study presented the outcomes of a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) involving 16 out of 20 students at Maulana Malik Ibrahim Islamic State University Malang, focusing on integrating Discord in critical listening courses. The researcher employed seven key elements in the FGD instruments: content, features, educational experience, feedback and interactions, students' progress and performance, interactivity, and potential drawbacks. Additionally, the researchers categorized the data of FGD into seven dimensions.

### 1. Content: More Structured and Accessible

Students found the way learning materials were delivered through Discord to be more organized compared to traditional platforms like WhatsApp or the university's eLearning system. Separate channels for classes, assignments, and discussions allowed them to navigate and access content more easily. One student described it as a "fresh" and more interactive approach to learning.

Extract 1 (May, 5th 2025)

*"My name is MI, I think Discord is more or less similar to other applications, but I strongly agree that Discord is more structured. There are separate columns for classes and assignments, making it more organized."*

Extract 2 (May, 5th 2025)

*“I think using Discord for our listening skill class brings a fresh approach to our learning. It's a bit different from what we're used to with WhatsApp and eLearning. The channels for course materials, private discussions, and video lessons make it more interactive and organized.”*

## **2. Features: Multifunctional and Collaboration-Friendly**

Students appreciated Discord's variety of features, such as group organization, dedicated material and video channels, and the ability to watch videos together. These tools made the platform more versatile and effective than others they had used previously, especially for collaborative tasks.

Extract 3 (May, 5<sup>th</sup> 2025)

*“My name is MA In my point of view; Discord is excellent because of its numerous features that assist educators. Features such as grouping, assignment distribution, and dedicated channels for materials and videos are very helpful. Compared to other apps like WhatsApp, Discord is more organized. A feature I particularly like is the ability to watch videos together with sound, whether on or off camera.”*

## **3. Educational Experience: More Engaging and Less Boring**

Unlike traditional methods where learning often felt monotonous, Discord provided a dynamic and enjoyable learning environment. Students noted that the inclusion of discussion-based activities, critical analysis, and varied tasks made the learning experience more meaningful.

Extract 8 (May, 5<sup>th</sup> 2025)

*“The use of Discord is very different from e-learning; Discord can provide a unique and enjoyable learning experience”*

Extract 9 (May, 5<sup>th</sup> 2025)

*“I agree with the previous opinion. With variations such as critical listening classes, it no longer becomes a boring activity limited to watching films, evaluating content, and presenting only in front of the class.”*

## **4. Feedback and Interactions: Real-Time and Dynamic**

Students reported that feedback was not limited to numerical grades but was often given in real time during presentations and discussions. They valued the immediacy and richness of feedback from both instructors and peers, which allowed for direct clarification and reflection.

Extract 10 (May, 5<sup>th</sup> 2025)

*"Feedback after quizzes or assignment submissions is not provided directly but is given in the form of grades.”*

Extract 11 (May, 5<sup>th</sup> 2025)

*“In critical listening classes, during discussion forums, chain questions, and presentations, feedback from the lecturer and the audience is given directly and can be responded to. This makes feedback in offline and online classes highly dynamic.”*

## **5. Progress and Performance: More Diverse Assessment**

Student performance was assessed through more than just presentations. Activities such as jigsaw learning, question chains, and small group projects were also used, which encouraged deeper participation and critical thinking.

Extract 12 (May, 5<sup>th</sup> 2025)

*"Performance in presentations is packaged differently, not only presenting in class but also using techniques like chain questions, jigsaw, and others."*

## **6. Interactivity: Opening Up Communication Channels**

Some students who previously struggled with listening skills said that Discord made it easier for them to engage with classmates and instructors. The interactive environment allowed for more meaningful and consistent communication.

Extract 14 (May, 5<sup>th</sup> 2025)

*"Previously, I felt that the subject that seemed easiest but I struggled with was listening. I felt that my interaction with teachers and other classmates was lacking because in the basic listening class, the teacher only provided listening materials related to TOEFL questions or short conversations. However, with Discord and a different learning atmosphere, I was able to engage in more extensive and comprehensive interactions with my peers."*

## **7. Drawbacks: Connectivity and Learning Curve**

Despite its many benefits, students noted some challenges. Internet connection issues, especially during peak hours, sometimes interfered with learning. Additionally, a few students found Discord's interface unfamiliar at first, requiring extra time to adapt.

Extract 17 (May, 5<sup>th</sup> 2025)

*"I often have issues with the Wi-Fi connection, especially when it's used during class hours or active study times."*

Based on the primary focus is on aligning the listening process adopted by Ardiansyah et al.'s (2021) instrument, which are content, feature, educational experience, feedback and interactions, student's progress and performance, interactivity, and possible drawback.

## **DISCUSSION**

Content delivery through Discord plays a pivotal role in the learning process, particularly in addressing the diverse needs of the critical listening course. In line with Barnad (2020), Discord facilitates direct synchronous interaction between educators and students, fostering an effective channel for delivering learning materials. This evaluation extends to assessing the relevance of content, its alignment with the curriculum, and the impact it has on skill enhancement. In the critical listening course, the learning materials encompass various formats, including video, audio, and communication, delving into the intricacies of how people create, exchange information, and interpret messages (Littlejohn and Foss, 2008).

Recognizing the essential role of learning technologies, as highlighted by Naidu (2003), institutions leverage tools like Discord and learning management systems to support higher education. Pinto (2020) emphasizes their positive impact on student engagement and participation. The systematic arrangement of content in new interactive learning formats holds the potential to elevate student interest, concentration, and overall learning outcomes. In this research, new interactive learning formats involves not only the content provided by the lecturer but also the creation design of fresh knowledge through dynamic conversation, chain questions, small group projects, and jigsaw learning. While of these techniques are effectively implemented in face-to-face meetings, their application in the online learning environment is limited. Prior research, the study of Tiarasari et al., (2018) work on interactive multimedia, underscores the significant enhancement of student interest in learning. Furthermore, Vercellotti (2017b) indicates that interactive learning spaces can make classroom instruction more effective and efficient.

The implementation of interactive learning, encompassing active, computer-based, and experiential approaches, as demonstrated by Krusche, Seitz, Börstler, and Bruegge (2017b), has consistently shown improvements in student participation, learning experiences, and exam grades. These collective findings strongly advocate for the use of systematic content presented in an interactive learning format to boost student engagement and outcomes. Discord's unique ability to organize materials in specific rooms streamlines the learning process, eliminating the need for students to scroll through numerous chats to find relevant content, thus enhancing accessibility and efficiency.

Discord platform effectively supports learning experiences, particularly in critical listening courses in higher education. Prior researchers have been found that Discord's features could enhance listening skills in various contexts. Lacher and Biehl, (2019) and Ardiyansah (2021) both highlight the platform's ability to facilitate group work and online learning, respectively, by allowing instructors to moderate interactions and students to engage in meaningful learning experiences. Additionally, it allows the students for sharing sources and announcements, accommodating a variety of content formats such as videos and audio clips. Voice channels enable real-time communication, fostering synchronous discussions, collaborative group projects, and live critical listening sessions (Raglianti et al., 2022b). Discord's server structure allows for the organized categorization of content, mirroring the course structure and facilitating easy navigation for students. Role management features enable educators to recognize and reward active contributors, while the notification system ensures timely updates on course-related activities. Discord's integration capabilities with various learning tools enhance the overall learning experience, and its user-friendly interface promotes accessibility and ease of use (Craig, 2023; Uong, 2022g; Ghazali,

2023). It is user-friendly interface promotes accessibility and ease of use, making it a favorable alternative media for online learning (Arifianto, 2021). The real-time collaboration aspect of Discord supports instant feedback and discussions, crucial elements in a critical listening course. Additionally, Craig (2023) adds that the platform's community-building features contribute to the formation of a learning community, fostering a sense of belonging among students. With mobile accessibility, Discord further enables students to engage with course content and discussions on the go, providing flexibility and enhancing the overall dynamic learning experience.

The immediate respond in Discord could facilitate instant and dynamic discussions among students and educators. This immediacy promotes timely feedback on assignments, fostering a responsive learning environment (Paladino, 2008). The platform's structure allows for organized categorization of discussions and resources, streamlining interactions and making it easier for students to seek feedback or clarification. Discord's integrative capabilities with various learning tools further enhance the feedback loop, enabling seamless integration of assessment tools or instant sharing of multimedia content for constructive critiques. The interactive nature of Discord encourages ongoing engagement, enabling students to actively participate in discussions, seek clarification, and receive real-time input from educators (Banson, 2022; Wiles and Simmons, 2022). Therefore, Discord's features significantly contribute to a more interactive and feedback-rich learning experience in critical listening courses.

However, it is essential to consider drawbacks of using Discord. Discord's informal nature may lead to distractions, and maintaining a focused learning environment might pose a challenge. Educators need to strike a balance between fostering a sense of community and ensuring that the platform remains conducive to academic endeavors. Additionally, incorporating the learning with Discord may lead drawbacks for some students who are unfamiliar with the platform.

## **CONCLUSION**

Students at Maulana Malik Ibrahim Islamic State University in Malang have found the use of Discord in critical listening courses to be advantageous. Students highlighted how well it delivered content, encouraged interaction, and allowed for prompt response. Discord's organizational features facilitate several learning styles and streamline accessibility and efficiency. Tools for collaboration and real-time communication increased student involvement and fostered a feeling of community. Even with possible downsides like certain students' lack of familiarity and unstable Wi-Fi connections, Discord proves to be a useful tool for fostering an engaged and feedback-rich learning environment in higher education. In this study, considering the drawbacks associated with using Discord for developing listening skills in critical listening courses, educators

should give additional effort in systematically managing course materials, assignments, and the learning agenda. This is essential to explore Discord's potential and ensure the seamless integration with the specific learning needs in this context. Furthermore, critical listening courses require a stable and high-quality internet connection to maintain dynamic interactions and obtain immediate feedback. This encourages educators to always provide a feasible connection in offline meetings, and students should also maintain a stable connection when learning online.

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