

Difficulties in Listening of the First Year Students at Tay Do University in Vietnam



Nga H.T. NGUYEN¹, Ngọc N.B. HUYNH², Linh T. VO³

^{1,2,3}Tay Do University

ABSTRACT: One of the most important skills for communicating in real life is the ability to listen. It is becoming increasingly vital to develop when studying a foreign language. Everyone understands that hearing a message is not the same as listening to it, listeners must comprehend the message and respond appropriately. The study finds the difficulties of the first year English majors in listening abilities. The participants were thirty-six freshmen majoring in English, course 16 at Tay Do University. Questionnaire and paper interview were delivered to collect problems. The results showed that background knowledge, length and speed of the text, unfamiliar vocabulary, and different accent were the major listening comprehension difficulties. Basing on these difficulties, English learners can find out suitable learning ways to improve their listening skill. It may also be useful for those who are interested in this field.

KEYWORDS: Listening skill, first year student, Tay Do University

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Rationale of the study

Listening is the most fundamental of the four language skills. Learners can be exposed to a lot of authentic input through listening, and if the input is comprehensible, it would lead to improvement of other areas of language such as pronunciation, speaking and even reading and writing (Anderson and Lynch: 1988). It is widely recognized today that listening is an active skill, or rather, a cluster of various sub-skills, which are both learnable and teachable. Listening is regarded as an essential element of foreign language proficiency, and plays an important role in foreign language programs. Listening is an important part of daily life. People listen for a variety of reasons, including studying, enjoyment, working, and so on. Due to the complex and intricate nature of listening comprehension in a second or foreign language, listening is said to be the most difficult of the four language skills that all language learners are expected to acquire. According to Pourhosein and Ahmadi (2011), listening comprehension is the process of understanding speech and it concentrates on role of linguistic units such as phonemes, words, and grammatical structures and the role of listener's anticipations, the situation and context, previous knowledge, and the subject. Morley (2001) says, listening is the most important skill for language learning because it can be mostly used in normal daily life and develops faster than the other language skills which indicates that it makes easy the development of the other language skills.

1.2. Aims of the study

This research is conducted to find out the difficulties in listening of English majored freshmen at Tay Do University to help them recognize their own problems. Thanks to these, students can find out some suitable solutions for their listening improvement.

1.3. Research questions

The research was conducted to answer the question: "What difficulties in listening that English-majored freshmen at TDU are facing?"

1.4. Significant of the study

The study is being performed to assist students majoring in English to understand the difficulties in listening. From this, they can find the methods to improve their listening skills while learning English. It is also hoped that the survey will be a beneficial reference for teachers of listening to get more insights into students' problems and making suitable adjustments in teaching them.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Definition of listening

Listening is one of the most crucial skills in learning a native language as well as a second or foreign language. It is receiving an increasing amount of attention. There have been a number of definitions of listening by different linguists.

Difficulties in Listening of the First Year Students at Tay Do University in Vietnam

Initially, according to Howatt and Dakin (1974), listening is the ability to recognize and grasp what others are saying. This entails comprehending a speaker's accent or pronunciation, as well as grammar, vocabulary, and meaning. Moreover, Brown (2001) says, listening is not merely the process of unidirectional receiving of audible symbols. He supposed that one aspect of listening comprehension which is the psychomotor process of receiving sound waves through the ear and transmitting nerve impulses to the brain. In addition, listening involves auditory discrimination, aural grammar, selecting information, remembering it, and connecting it to the process between sound and form of meaning Morley (1972). Listening as an active process requiring the same skills of prediction, hypothesizing, checking, revising, and generalizing. Listening demands concentration and attention. It is a skill that some people require to work harder than others. People who have difficulty in concentration are often poor listeners.

To summarize, all of the definitions are presented in order to clarify the nature of the listening skill that is required in the learning of a native or a foreign language.

Types of listening

There are two types of listening in real life. Depending on the purpose of listening, there is casual listening and focused listening. Casual listening is a type of listening that is done without a particular purpose in mind. When we listen, we do not pay much attention to the information unless it is something that we are interested in. As a result, we do not remember much of what we hear. This type of listening is common when we listen to music or the news on the radio or television while doing housework or speaking with a friend.

Focused listening is another type of listening. That is when we listen with a specific purpose, such as learning something new. It is a common thing in real life. Here, we pay much closer attention and try to absorb as much information as possible. We, on the other hand, do not pay attention to every word. We know what we are going to listen to ahead of time, so we only take in the most crucial details from the speech or lecture. This type of listening is also used in the classroom.

2.2. The importance of listening

Listening is essential for language learning because it offers aural input that is essential for language acquisition and allows learners to interact in spoken communication. Listening plays an important role in communication, in the total time spent on communicating, listening takes up 40-50%; speaking, 25-30%; reading, 11-16%; and writing, about 9%, Mendelsohn (1994). This shows that, listening takes a half of time in communication. Moreover, that is a main factor, without listening, communication cannot operate effectively. It is the means by which people obtain a significant percentage of their education, information, understanding of the world and human affairs, ideas, sense of values, and appreciation. It is crucial that students are trained to listen effectively and critically in this day and time of mass communication, most of which is oral.

2.3. Problems encountered by students in listening

2.3.1. Background knowledge

Lack of background knowledge is an obstacle during the learning process. Buck (2001) describes background knowledge as general non-linguistic knowledge about the world we live in and how things work within it including knowledge of the target culture, knowledge of current affairs, arts, politics and literature. Therefore, students need to prepare the listening materials based on topics which are political issue, business report, daily conversation and etc.

Moreover, Anderson and Lynch (2000) state that lack of social - cultural, factual and contextual knowledge of the target language can also present an obstacle to comprehension because language is used to express culture. Even if listeners can understand the surface meaning of the text, they may have considerable difficulties in comprehending the whole meaning of the passage unless they are familiar with the context. Nonverbal clues such as facial expressions, nods, gestures, or tone of voice can also be easily misinterpreted by listeners from different culture.

To conclude, the learner's background is an outstanding agent in listening comprehension. Having background knowledge is a key feature to the successful understanding of any kind of listening materials.

2.3.2. Length and speed of listening

When students listen to long parts and keep all information in their minds, their level can play a big impact. Lower-level students find it challenging to listen for more than three minutes. Learners will have an easier time understanding short listening passages and will be less tired, Azmi et al (2014).

Moreover, according to Underwood (1989), there are some barriers to effective listening comprehension process. First, listeners cannot control the speed of speech. The biggest problem with listening comprehension is that listeners are not able to control how quickly speakers talk. Second, listeners cannot have words repeated and this can cause critical difficulties for them. Students cannot replay a recording section. Teachers decide what and when to repeat listening texts and it is very difficult for teachers to know whether or not their learners understood what they have heard. Third, listeners do not have a wide vocabulary. Speakers may choose words that are unfamiliar to the listener. Fourth, listeners may lack contextual knowledge. Listeners may find it easier to communicate if they have mutual knowledge and are familiar with the texts. Finally, it is not very easy for listeners to concentrate on the listening text. Sometimes a shortest break in attention can prevent comprehension. If the listening passage is interesting for listeners, concentration will be easy for them.

Difficulties in Listening of the First Year Students at Tay Do University in Vietnam

2.3.3. Unfamiliar vocabulary

Sometimes learners make mistakes when listening text has much specialized terminology vocabulary. Specialized terminology vocabulary is some words specialized for particular areas. If learners do not have rich and plentiful vocabulary, they will be confused when listening. In reality, the speakers may use synonyms, antonyms to explain the word. Underwood (1989) points that, for students listening to a foreign language, it is certain that they cannot know all words in the speech like mother tongue. Therefore, when they hear an unknown word which can be like a suddenly dropped barrier, they may stop and think about the meaning of word.

Also, Azmi et al (2014) say that, it is quite easy for students to recognize familiar words in listening texts. When students understand the meaning of words, it can increase their interest and motivation, as well as improve their listening comprehension. Many words have several meanings, and if they are not used correctly in their proper situations, students will become confused.

2.3.4. Different accent

According to Yagang (1994), listeners have tendency to get familiar with the accents which they mostly listen. If listeners are exposed to standard British or American, they will be faced problems in understanding other accents. All of us know that many countries speak English, such as British English, American English, Australian English, Japanese English and so on. Therefore, learners find it hard to distinguish which words the speakers are mentioning when listening to a new accent for the first time.

In addition, Buck (2001) indicates that when listeners hear an unfamiliar accent, such as Indian English for the first time after studying only American English, they will encounter essential difficulties in listening. That causes students confused in learning English listening. Munro and Derwing (1999) state that too many accented speeches can lead to an important reduction in comprehension. Also 66% of listeners referred speakers' accents as one of the most important factors that impact on listening comprehension Goh (1999). Unfamiliar accents of both native and non-native can cause serious problems in listening comprehension. This will interrupt the whole listening comprehension process and at the same time an unfamiliar accent makes comprehension impossible for listeners.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design

The study was carried out to find out the problems with English listening skills as well as to answer to the research question. The participants were freshmen who are majoring in English. The data from the interview and questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively to identify the challenges that English majored freshmen at Tay Do University have with listening.

3.2. Participants

The participants of this study were thirty-six freshmen majoring in English, course 16. They came from different areas, both rural and urban. They spoke Vietnamese as their mother tongue and English as foreign language. They were given a questionnaire and fifteen of them completed interview paper in order to get information about problems in listening skills.

3.3. Instrument

The instruments were a questionnaire and an interview. The importance of the questionnaire was that it helps to identify problems. And an interview was a useful method for collecting more detailed information.

3.3.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section contained 7 questions to collect some general information of participants. The second section included 18 statements evaluated based on 5 scales: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree. The summary of questionnaire was presented in the following table:

Table 1: The gist of questionnaire

Question/Statement	Summary of the question's/statement's content
From 1 to 7	Students' background
From 8 to 11	Background knowledge
From 12 to 17	Length and speed
From 19 to 21	Vocabulary
From 22 to 25	Accent

3.3.2. Interview paper

The second data gathering instrument was interview paper. It was designed to get ideas about the difficulties in learning listening skill process. It consisted of three open-ended questions focusing on three principal points, specifically, general ideas about listening skill, difficulties that students have faced during learning listening process and solutions to overcome them. Moreover, by providing opportunities for learners to answer in their own words, we might gain their understanding and attitudes towards some of these difficulties.

Difficulties in Listening of the First Year Students at Tay Do University in Vietnam

4. RESULTS

This part showed the findings of the whole investigation. The findings were represented for analyzing the collected data from 36 English majored freshmen mentioned. The results included two sections which were from the questionnaire and from the interview paper.

4.1. General report from the questionnaire

4.1.1. Students' background information

Students' years of learning English

Most of students have been learning English since grade 3 (ten years) with 69.45%. The others have been studying English from grade 6, accounting for 30.55%. Based on the data, it could be concluded that the number of years that students spent on learning English had an impact on their listening ability.

Students' living condition

The living conditions of students are considered as a critical factor that has a direct impact on the process of learning English, particularly listening skill. 36.11% of English majored freshmen are from rural areas, whereas only 63.89% are from urban areas. As we all know, quality of education in rural areas, particularly in English courses, is always limited. Due to a lack of teaching equipment, it is typically difficult for students in rural areas to improve their English skills. Furthermore, most high school lectures focus on grammar and vocabulary, which does not assist students to develop language abilities, particularly listening skills.

Students' attitude toward the importance of listening skill

75% of students conceded that listening skill was extremely significant and 13.90% considered listening is important. On the other hand, the number of students thought that the role of listening comprehension is normal with 8.30% and only 2.80% did not admit the importance of this skill. Indeed, English is defined as an international language so that learning English is very essential, especially listening comprehension which is one of the most important skill in communication. When learners deeply know the role of listening, they will have motivations and inspiration to study seriously.

Students' attitude toward English listening skill

94.44% of students had a good attitude toward listening skills, while 5.66% disliked listening skills. As a result, students' attitudes frequently influence their listening ability, because if they lack passion, they will have a tough time learning to listen.

Students' self-practice in listening skill

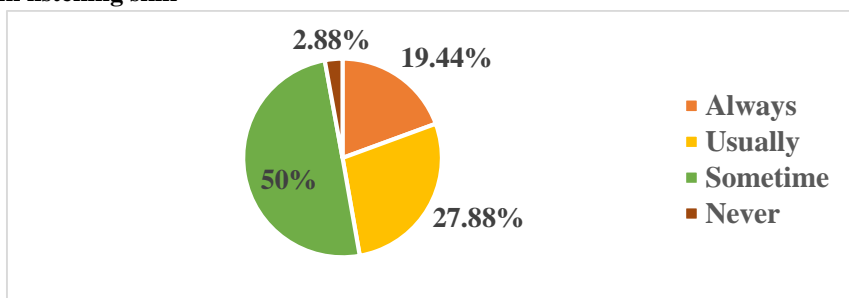


Figure 1: Students' self-practice in listening skill

Only 19.44% of students who always spent time for practicing listening comprehension skill. Furthermore, the amount of students usually self-practice in listening counted on 27.78% which was higher than first-said proportion. Meanwhile, the percentage of students rehearsed this skill in sometimes increased with 50%. Then, the number of students who never practice listening skill went down 2.78%. For the collected statistics, the researcher could conclude that English majored freshmen did spend time on self-practicing listening skill on a daily basis in spite of such amount of time.

Students' self-evaluation on listening skill

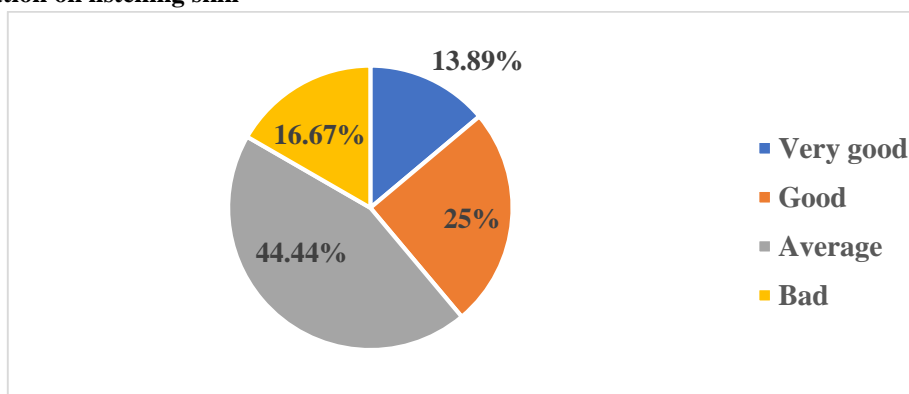


Figure 2: Students' self-evaluation on listening skill

Difficulties in Listening of the First Year Students at Tay Do University in Vietnam

It can be seen from the figure 2 that more than 38% of students thought that their English was good enough for communication (13.89% very good and 25% good). Additionally, 44.44% of students conceded that their listening skill was at the average. 16.67% said that they were bad at English listening skill. In brief, a student needs to reevaluate whether his or her listening is good or not to have reasonable studying methods. In simpler terms, self-evaluation is very necessary when learners want to enhance their listening ability.

4.1.2. Students' difficulties in listening skill

In order to know more about the difficulties students faced in listening, these difficulties will be presented in following parts.

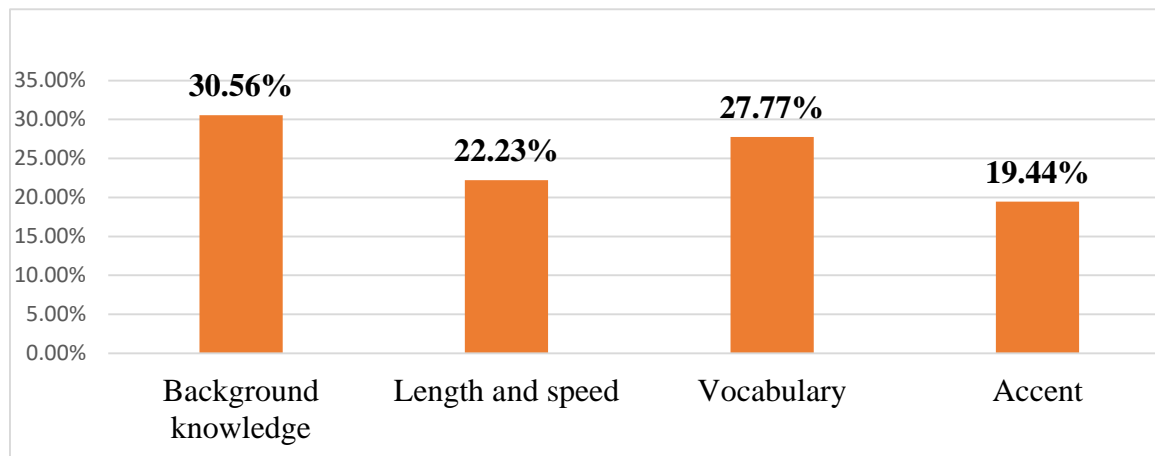


Figure 3: Difficulties in Listening Comprehension

It was surprised that background knowledge factors were the highest percentage, it accounted for 30.56% of the total. That meant background knowledge played an important role in listening. If students lacked knowledge, the listening process would be affected. Besides, many words had various meaning – polysemous words, they could not choose the appropriate word to complete the answer. Thus, vocabulary was not less important difficulty with 27.77%. Moreover, even if there were familiar words, students could not recognize them because speakers spoke fast and the long time listening made them less concentration. They also made mistakes due to length and speed which was 22.23%. Lastly, students were usually confused when they got the unfamiliar accent comprised 19.44%. Let's find more details in the following tables.

Difficulties in background knowledge

According to figure 3, background knowledge accounted for 30.56% - the highest difficulties in listening. Background knowledge was the most important factor effecting learners' listening ability. It was hard to catch the meaning of sentence when lacking background knowledge. The table below would show some difficulties in background knowledge.

Table 2: Difficulties in listening skill related to background knowledge

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
8. I find it difficult to understand listening texts when the topic is unfamiliar to me.	5.56%	55.56%	11.11%	19.44%	8.33%
9. I may misinterpret what the speakers say if I do not deeply find out their culture.	13.89%	47.22%	27.78%	8.33%	2.78%
10. I usually translate what I hear into Vietnamese because of lacking the knowledge of background.	11.12%	41.67%	30.55%	8.33%	8.33%
11. I cannot understand the main messages of the listening texts because of my poor background knowledge.	8.33%	47.22%	13.89%	27.78%	2.78%

Referring to the table 2 - difficulties in listening skill related to background knowledge aspect. There were more than half of students gave approval (5.56% strongly agreed and 55.56% agreed), 11.11% did not take any side, and approximately 30% giving objection (19.44% disagreed and 8.33% strongly disagreed) with statement 8, "I find it difficult to understand listening texts when the topic is unfamiliar to me."

Next, with statement 9, "I may misinterpret what the speakers say if I do not deeply find out their culture." There were 47.22% agreed and 13.89% strongly agreed that students answered. There were up to 27.78% students who did not give idea.

Difficulties in Listening of the First Year Students at Tay Do University in Vietnam

Then, students who agreed with statement 10, “I usually translate what I hear into Vietnamese because of lacking the knowledge of background.” were 52.79%, and the percentage of disagreed were 16.66%

The last one was statement 11, “I cannot understand the main messages of the listening texts because of my poor background knowledge.” The results revealed that approval was given by more than 50% of participants (8.33% strongly agreed and 47.22% disagreed). On the contrary, 13.89% stayed hesitated, approximately 30% giving objection (27.78% disagreed and 2.78% strongly disagreed).

Difficulties in length and speed

It can be seen in figure 3, difficulties in length and speed comprised 22.23% - the third difficulties in listening. First, let’s get more details about difficulties in the length of texts.

Table 3: Difficulties in listening skills related to the length of texts

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
12. I cannot concentrate well when listening to a long text.	11.12%	47.22%	22.22%	19.44%	0%
13. I feel bored when the listening tasks are too long.	2.78%	41.67%	22.22%	30.55%	2.78%
14. I find it difficult to understand the listening text when the speaker does not pause long enough.	8.33%	55.56%	13.89%	22.22%	0%

According to the data from table 3, it was very clear that there over 58% of the participants (11.12% extremely approved and 47.22% agreed) who agreed that they met problems while listening to long spoken text. Meanwhile, 22.22% of students chose neutral option and 19.44% of them selected disagreed with statement 12, “I cannot concentrate well when listening to a long text.”

Next, with statement 13, “I feel bored when the listening tasks are too long.” the number of students choosing agreement was the highest (41.67%), only 2.78% strongly agreed or strongly disagreed. Besides, there were also 22.22% did not take any idea and 30.55% disagreed with this statement.

In addition, with statement 14, “I find it difficult to understand the listening text when the speaker does not pause long enough.”, almost students (8.33% strongly agreed and 55.56% agreed) who thought that they met obstacles to understand the spoken text and 13.89% gave no idea. In contrast, some of the students disagreed with this statement (22.22%) who had confidence in listening to texts with fast rate.

Students also found it difficulties in the speed of texts. The table below would present clearly.

Table 4: Difficulties in listening skills related to speed

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
15. I have low listening speed.	8.33%	50%	13.89%	25%	2.78%
16. I find it difficult to understand well when speakers speak too fast.	19.44%	55.56%	16.67%	8.33%	0%
17. I cannot understand foreigners because they speak too fast.	13.89%	47.22%	16.67%	13.89%	8.33%

From table 4, we could observe that most of answers fell into agreement choice. In statement 15, “I have low listening speed.” the majority of students agreed that they had a slow listening speed (8.33% strongly agreed and 50% agreed). However, more than a quarter of students objected (25% disagreed and 2.78% strongly disagreed), and 13.89% had no idea.

Next, with statement 16, “I find it difficult to understand well when speakers speak too fast.” The number of students choosing agreement was the highest (55.56%) whereas the lowest one was disagreement (8.33%). Besides, there were also 19.44% decided on strongly agreed and 16.67% did not take any idea.

Additionally, there were more than 60% of participants (13.89% strongly agreed and 47.22% agreed) who agreed with statement 17, “I cannot understand foreigners because they speak too fast.” 16.67% gave the neutral selection. In contrast, 13.89% of the students found it easy to understand foreigners even though they speak fast and 8.33% fell into strongly disagreement.

Difficulties in Listening of the First Year Students at Tay Do University in Vietnam

Difficulties in vocabulary

It can be seen in figure 3, vocabulary comprised 27.77% - the second difficulties in listening. Vocabulary is one of the factors that helps students understand the listening texts efficiently. To deeply understand the difficulties in vocabulary aspect, let's have a look at the table below.

Table 5: Difficulties in listening skills related to vocabulary

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
18. Sometimes, I lose my concentration when listening because I think about the meaning of new words.	2.78%	61.11%	13.89%	22.22%	0%
19. During listening, although some words sound familiar, it is difficult for me to recall their meaning immediately.	19.44%	44.45%	8.33%	27.78%	0%
20. When thinking about meaning of unfamiliar words, I neglect the next part of the listening text.	5.56%	58.33%	13.89%	19.44%	2.78%
21. When I hear the new words, I forget the content which was mentioned before.	5.56%	47.22%	19.44%	27.78%	0%

From the data in table 3, 2.78% strongly agreed and 61.11% agreed with statement 18, "Sometimes, I lose my concentration when listening because I think about the meaning of new words." Nonetheless, 13.89% of them did not take any ideas and 22.22% made decisions that they disagreed with it.

The next one was statement 19, "During listening, although some words sound familiar, it is difficult for me to recall their meaning immediately." The results revealed that approval was given by 60% of participants (19.44% gave strong agreement and 44.45% showed their concurrence). On the contrary, 8.33% stayed hesitated and the remainders 27.78% disagreed.

For statement 20, "When thinking about meaning of unfamiliar words, I neglect the next part of the listening text." Most of the students believed that it was true (5.56% strongly agreed and 58.33% agreed) and 13.89% were in the middle. Nevertheless, 19.44% of them gave disagreement and 2.78% strongly disagree with it.

The last one was statement 21, "When I hear the new words, I forget the content which was mentioned before." As you can be seen from the table, numerous choices falling into agreement was 47.22% and strongly agreement was 5.56%. The students also gave the neutrality (19.44%) and disagreement (27.78%).

Difficulties in accent

According to figure 3, accent accounted for 19.44% - just a little of the difficulties in listening. These difficulties would be represented below.

Table 6: Difficulties in listening skills related to accent

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
22. It is difficult to understand speakers with unfamiliar accents.	5.56%	50%	13.89%	27.77%	2.78%
23. I find it difficult to understand well when speakers speak with a variety of accents.	11.11%	52.78%	22.22%	13.89%	0%
24. Unfamiliar accents of both native and non-native speakers make me cannot recognize the familiar words.	19.44%	47.23%	27.77%	2.78%	2.78%
25. It is difficult to distinguish word which was mentioned when hearing a new accent at first time.	2.78%	55.56%	22.22%	16.66%	2.78%

Statement 22, "It is difficult to understand speakers with unfamiliar accents." stated that there were approximately 56% of students who agreed (5.56% strongly agreed and 50% agreed) that they found it difficult to understand when speakers speak with strange accents. Nevertheless, there were also 13.89% of them who did not take any idea, 27.77% made choices in disagreement side and only 2.78% who strongly disagreed with it.

Difficulties in Listening of the First Year Students at Tay Do University in Vietnam

For statement 23, "I find it difficult to understand well when speakers speak with a variety of accents." there were several ideas from the responds, over 60% of students who approved with this idea (11.11% strongly agreed and 52.78% agreed) and 22.22% of them had no ideas. On the other hand, the rest of them who could follow the speakers with variety of accents (13.89%).

Additionally, students who agreed with the statement 24, "Unfamiliar accents both native and non-native speakers make you encounter difficulty." were 47.23% and 19.44% strongly agreed. There were 5.56% students who did not encounter because of the unfamiliar accents both native and non-native.

Furthermore, with statement 25, "It is difficult to distinguish word which was mentioned when hearing a new accent at first time." more than half of the students (2.78% strongly agreed and 55.56 % agreed) found it difficult to recognize the words when being said in a strange accent. However, some students found no difficulties while hearing a new accent for the first time (16,67% disagreed and 2.78% strongly disagreed). Furthermore, 22.22% of them answered in the neutral state.

4.2. General report from the interview paper

In order to make the study more reliable, ten students were invited to get an interview. After analyzing the interviews carefully, the final results were similar with the results of the questionnaires.

First of all, when being asked, "What do you think about listening skill?", all of the students reported that this was an important skill for English learning process. They also stated that this skill is the most difficult one when comparing with others skill (speaking, writing and reading). They also explained that listening was a key to all effective communication.

In question 2, "Which difficulties have you faced when you listen to English?" six participants met the obstacles in listening subject as accents, vocabulary and background knowledge. Moreover, vocabulary was big obstacles in learning listening because lacking vocabulary led them to misunderstanding the texts. One student said: "There are some academic words that I cannot understand and it leads to misunderstand the whole text", another one added, "I miss many main points because of my poor vocabulary." Outstanding these mentioned difficulties, the students who participated in this interview also debated unfamiliar topic, the speech rate and the length of text. They shared, "I can only concentrate on the last parts of the listening texts when listening to a long text." And "I think the speaker speaks too quickly, making it difficult to listen correctly." Or "I get confused and can't concentrate on the listening texts when I'm listening to a topic that is unknown to me."

The last question was concerned with students' self-practice in listening skill, "How do you improve your listening skills?" The majority of the students stated that they attempted to expand their vocabulary and wrote it on their notes. They practice on their own for around 20-30 minutes each day before heading to class. Furthermore, they typically practiced this skill by listening to English songs and watching movies with or without subtitles in English.

Generally, after analyzing the interviews, students had some problems in listening. It was the fact that listening was an uneasy skill, it required learners spend time to practice and improve.

5. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate common challenges in listening skills among English majored freshmen at Tay Do University. After reviewing the questionnaires and interview papers, it was clear that students face a variety of challenges when learning the subject of listening, the most common of which were background knowledge, vocabulary, text length and speed, and accents. Let's go over each one individually in order to gain a better understanding of the issues.

Firstly, it was realized that students' listening ability was affected by background knowledge. In detail, sometimes, they could not understand listening materials because they did not know much about the topics.

Secondly, students' listening skills were harmed by a lack of vocabulary. Students may struggle to grasp the meaning of a text if it had a large number of unfamiliar words and the habits of trying to understand every word hearing.

Thirdly, the length of spoken text and delivery speed had an impact on students' ability to listen. Speakers with a slow rate of speech would be easy to understand. Furthermore, students may be confused by extended listening material since they did not know which sections were crucial and found it difficult to grasp the core points.

Finally, the different accents they were exposed to be problematic for many language learners. English is spoken around the world for communication and they should understand with different accents. Another important problem was students lack the ability to use visual clues while listening.

In conclusion, the research's outcome figured out that freshmen met various problems in conquering listening skills. It was expected that students find out some solutions to self-study and get higher mark in their listening subject.

5.2. Conclusions

As a matter of the research, listening is extremely important not only in language learning but also in daily communication. However, being one of the students majoring in English, students seemed to be weak and encountered various problems in listening skill. This study was done in the hope of pointing out their difficulties during the process of learning listening skill.

Difficulties in Listening of the First Year Students at Tay Do University in Vietnam

The findings of the questionnaire and interview papers allowed to reach the conclusion about the overall study. Background knowledge, poor vocabulary, the length of the spoken text, the rate of speech, and a strange of accents were all issues that students face when learning listening skill. In conclusion, despite attending numerous lectures on the subject of listening, English majoring freshmen were still unable to achieve the level of good listening skills.

5.3. Implications

Firstly, for students, some suggestions that could be employed them to encounter listening skill problems include follows. Students should spend more time on practicing and practice regularly by using other English listening materials (podcasts, Youtube channels, English stories and so on) along with their course books and focusing on the variety of native- speakers' accents and the speed of the texts. Learners need to invest more time to practice listening in English. The more they listen, the more they are familiar with English. If learners are familiar with what they hear, the way and the speed how the speakers speak in English can be followed. The next solutions are activating the students' vocabulary and background knowledge by themselves. Students should be equipped with a wide range of vocabulary and background information needed for the listening text. Frequently using extensive listening topic is also a good way to develop students' background knowledge. Furthermore, making learning listening more entertaining by watching movies with English content and subscribing the channels in English that interest learners.

Second, there were a few recommendations for teachers to help students overcome their difficulties. Activating students' vocabulary awareness by asking them to guess the meaning of words used in the listening context before explaining the meaning to them. Students are more likely to listen better or more effectively when they can relate what they already know to what they are supposed to listen. Furthermore, students should be exposed to a variety of hearing resources, including films, TV plays, announcements, everyday conversation, storytelling, English music, and so on.

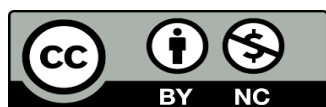
Finally, it hoped that the results of this study will contribute to get more insight into the field of listening skill at Tay Do University.

5.4. Recommendations

This research is considered as the premise for upcoming research. Based on the research results, other researchers can be able to do more in-depth research on the difficulties encountered by sophomores in listening. Hopefully, in the future, other researchers should be done widely English majored and English non-majored. From there, teachers can find out appropriate teaching methods and listening becomes more interesting to students.

REFERENCES

- 1) Anderson, A., and Lynch, T. (1988). *Listening*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 2) Brown, H.D. (2001). *Teaching by principles. An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. White Plains, NY: Pearson Education.
- 3) Morley, J. (2001). *Aural Comprehension Instruction: Principles and Practices*. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language* (pp. 69-85) Boston: Heinle and Heinle.
- 4) Pourhosein, G. A., & Ahmadi, S. M. (2011). The Effect of Text Familiarity on Iranian EFL Learners' Listening Comprehension. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 2(4), 783-789.
- 5) Anderson, A., & Lynch, T (2000). *Listening*. Oxford University Press
- 6) Azmi, B. M., Celik, B., Yidliz, N., & Tugrul, M. C. (2014). Listening Comprehension Difficulties Encountered by Students in Second Language Learning Class. *Journal of Educational and Instructional Studies in the World*, 4(4), 1-6.
- 7) Buck, G. (2001). *Assessing Listening*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 8) Goh, C. (1999). *Teaching Listening in the Language Classroom*. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.
- 9) Howatt, A. and Dakin, J. (1974). *Language laboratory materials. Techniques in applied linguistics. Edinburgh course in applied linguistics. Vol. 3*. London: Oxford University Press.
- 10) Morley, H. J. (1972). The Use of Films in Teaching English as Second Language. *Language learning*, 22(1), 101-103.
- 11) Munro, M. J., and Derwing, T. M. (1999). Foreign Accent, Comprehensibility and Intelligibility in the Speech of Second Language Learners. *Language Learning*, 49(1), 285-310.
- 12) Underwood, M. (1989). *Teaching listening*. New York: Longman.
- 13) Yagang, F. (1994) *Listening: Problems and Solutions*. Teacher Development: Making the Right Moves. US Information Agency: Washington DC, 189-196.



There is an Open Access article, distributed under the term of the Creative Commons Attribution – Non Commercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits remixing, adapting and building upon the work for non-commercial use, provided the original work is properly cited.