

DIFFICULTIES IN LISTENING OF NON-ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS AT TAY DO UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Listening is considered to be the most important part of communication skills that contribute to the success of language learners. Unfortunately, students who are not majoring in English often have some difficulty listening to English. Therefore, the study "Difficulties in listening of non-English major students at Tay Do University" was conducted to find out some common factors that caused listening difficulties encountered by non-English major students. Subjects participating in this study were 30 non-English majors from two classes of Business Administration 16A and Banking and Finance class 16 of Tay Do University. The main research tools that were provided for data collection are interviews and observations. This is a qualitative research. The results of this study were analyzed to show the factors affecting learners' difficulties in language factors (vocabulary, grammatical structure and pronunciation), listening comprehension (listening duration, speaker's speaking of speed), background knowledge and psychological factors (inhibition and motivation).

Keywords: *Listening, difficulties in listening.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale

In recent years, Vietnam's economy has become more deeply and broadly integrated with the global economy. Nowadays, English is regarded as the most widely used language for exchanging information and ideas between countries. As a result, English is extremely important in our lives. As society develops, it is becoming increasingly important for everyone to have fluent English skills in order to meet the needs of integration into the global economy and cultural exchange with other countries. As a result, being fluent in English provides people with more opportunities for career advancement and personal success. Furthermore, English is essential for those who want to travel or study abroad because it allows them to communicate and understand the native language, culture, or cuisine. As a result, English is widely used as a second language throughout the world.

However, learning English is a time-consuming process in which students spend a significant amount of time learning and practicing all four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). Listening is arguably the most difficult of the four language skills for students. One of the most important skills in learning English is listening. Hamouda (2013) claims the ability to listen is critical in acquiring input. There will be no learning if there is no input. In fact, in order to speak and read correctly, people must first learn to listen correctly. Furthermore, communication allows people to understand one another. Listening is an important part of the communication process, as Pourhosein Gilakjani and Mohammadreza Ahmadi (2011) write. Foreign language learners who have good listening skills can clearly understand the vocabulary, pronunciation, and meaning. According to Mendelsohn (1994), listening accounts for 40-50% of total communication time; say 25-30%; reading is 11-16%; and writing is about 9%. This demonstrates that listening consumes half of the time spent in communication. However, learning to listen again is a challenge for them because some children believe that listening is not as important as other skills and thus devote less time to it. According to Vandergrift (1997), listening involves hypothesizing, predicting, generalizing, modifying, and testing listening inputs. Students must prepare thoroughly before listening.

Most students have difficulty listening because they do not understand what the speaker is saying. Because universities focus on grammar and vocabulary, English learners have significant listening difficulties. According to Hamouda (2013), listening and speaking skills are not emphasized in the book, and teachers do not value them in

their classrooms. Students are unable to listen due to a variety of factors such as vocabulary, pronunciation, grammatical, basic knowledge, length and rate of speech, and motivation. Learning to listen is the most difficult aspect of learning a foreign language. Listening is a necessary skill and even a factor in foreign language preparation, according to Rost (1994). Language ability is an excellent predictor of future success.

Understanding the aforementioned issues, the research team decided to conduct a survey titled "Difficulties in listening of non-English major students at Tay Do University" in the hopes that non-specialized students English majors will recognize their difficulties, overcome them, and improve their listening skills.

1.2 Significance

This study mainly focuses on finding out the difficulties related to English listening of non-English major students at Tay Do University, and through those problems, the researcher wishes to help students members recognize their own difficulties in listening. As a result, these non-English majors can find useful solutions to improve their listening skills.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Definition of the term listening

Listening is one of the most important language skills. It is crucial when learning a language. Furthermore, listening is one of four fundamental English skills with numerous definitions from various experts.

According to Linse (2006: 25), listening comprehension skill can prepare children to develop reading comprehension skill because developing good listening skills allows children to match sounds with corresponding symbols when decoding words. According to studies, we spend 45% of our time listening. We prefer to listen to speak. We can master the tools of communicative skills if we use this listening skill correctly. Listening is difficult because the human mind is easily distracted. A person who can control his mind and listens intently learns and benefits from a variety of other skills. Listening, like reading, requires knowledge of phonology, syntax, semantics, and text comprehension. As Thomlison (1984) defines listening as active listening, which is critical for effective communication. It means that listening is a medium through which we obtain information. According to Rost (1994: 148), teaching listening is an important part of second language instruction. That is, students should begin to recognize that listening is an important skill that must be nurtured and developed. We can define listening as the ability to identify and comprehend what the other person is saying. Brown defines listening as a student's spoken or written response indicating correct (or incorrect) auditory processing. Learners must actively think while listening in order to improve their listening skills. Listening is involved in many language-learning activities, both inside and outside of the language classroom. The improvement in listening will serve as a foundation for the development of other language skills. Listening is the natural precursor to speaking; the early stages of language development in a person's first language (and in naturalistic acquisition of other languages) are dependent on listening write Nation and Jonathan. Listening, according to Lorena Manaj, is yet another requirement in language. The better your listening skills, the more successful and satisfied you will be. Listening is more than just hearing: it is a state of receptivity that allows for comprehension of what is heard and full participation in the communication process.

After all of the preceding discussion, listening is defined differently by scholar and field of study. It is also defined simply as the interactive process by which people convey meaning. The primary goal of listening is to facilitate communication between people and to improve everyone's listening skills. Listening is an essential skill in everyday life, and learners who want to become good listeners must put in the effort to practice it.

2.2 The importance of listening

Listening is an important skill that allows us to receive, comprehend, and evaluate information that is communicated to us. As humans, we seek to interact with one another on a daily basis. This interaction consists of two key components: speaking and listening.

Listening is an important part of communication in people's everyday lives. As Guo and Wills (2006) state it is the medium through which people obtain the majority of their education, information, understanding of the world and human affairs, ideals, and sense of values. Proper listening is not only important for the listener, but it is also an essential part of the "aizuchi" process (enhances the speaker's role in communication). Understanding and overcoming listening barriers is also critical in facilitating highly effective communication skills. According to Peterson (2001), no other type of language input is as easy to process as spoken language, received through listening. Learners can gain an understanding of the interworkings of language systems at various levels by listening, laying the groundwork for more fluent productive skills. Listening is also a tool that allows us to tailor our approach when communicating with others on various levels, and it allows us to either present or receive a response. Everyone's level of listening differs depending on factors such as time, place, feelings, beliefs, and so on. Listening is essential not only in everyday life, but also in the classroom. Anderson and Lynch (2003) state that when we are

in an unfamiliar listening environment, such as listening to a language in which we have limited proficiency, we only become aware of what remarkable feats of listening we achieve. Most people believe that being able to write and speak in a second language demonstrates knowledge of the language; however, effective communication is impossible if they do not have effective listening skills. That is, listening is the fundamental skill in language learning, and students will spend more than half of their time functioning in a foreign language (Nunan, 1998).

To summarize, listening is critical for people to maintain effective communication in both daily life and academic contexts. Anderson and Lynch (2003) emphasize the importance of listening skills, stating that they are as important as speaking skills because people cannot communicate face-to-face unless both types of skills are developed concurrently. Listening skills are also important for learning because they allow students to receive information and gain insights (Wallace, Stariha & Walberg, 2004).

2.3 Difficulties in listening comprehension

2.3.1 Vocabulary

Vocabulary is one of the areas of knowledge that learners must master when learning a language. As a result, the most important factor influencing learners' listening ability is vocabulary. According to Chastain (1988), the most common reason why students cannot say what they want to say speaking in communicative activities is a lack of necessary vocabulary.

Ineffective vocabulary can be a major issue for students because it makes it difficult for them to express themselves and listen carefully enough to understand what others are saying. According to Thornbury (2002), without grammar, very little can be communicated, and without vocabulary, nothing can be communicated. In fact, if learners do not have the vocabulary, they will be unable to understand what the speaker is saying. Azmi et al(2014) define hearing comprehension as the ability to recognize others through the senses, organs of hearing, and assign meaning to a message in order to understand it. Furthermore, vocabulary is the main ingredient that aids in the promotion of other skills. According to Richard and Renandya (2002: 255), vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency, providing much of the foundation for learning to speak, listen, read, and write. Indeed, as a language learner, he will use words fluently to speak, listen, read, and write in a specific context and understand the meaning clearly, whereas it is difficult to have enough vocabulary if there is insufficient vocabulary. The most common reason for students not being able to say what they want to say in communicative activities is a lack of essential vocabulary. Because learners do not frequently use the words they learn, they may forget them. This creates a significant problem because they are unable to recognize words learned earlier in a listening passage. In other words, a word does not have a single meaning but can have several. Learners are frequently perplexed when it comes to selecting the appropriate word in various contexts. In other cases, speakers frequently associate the final consonant with the first vowel of the word. The following word causes learners to be unable to identify the word during the listening process. Most students agree that they cannot know the linking words because they lack a large vocabulary. According to Underwood (1989), students who listen to a foreign language cannot know all of the words in the speech as if they were their mother tongue. As a result, when they hear an unknown word that appears to be an unexpected barrier dropped, they may pause and consider the meaning of the word. Ardila (2013) discovered that students' listening skills are hampered by a lack of vocabulary. In addition, Ardila's study participants had the same difficulty listening because they did not know the keywords. Furthermore, when participants detect an unknown word, they begin to consider the meaning of the words and, as a result, sometimes miss the later part of the listening because they stop listening. As a result, students' listening skills will be hampered due to a lack of vocabulary. Furthermore, if students only focus on the meaning of unknown words, they will miss the information in the following section.

In conclusion, vocabulary is regarded as an essential component of learning English, particularly listening skills. Having a large vocabulary is thus a significant advantage for those who want to be good listeners.

2.3.2 Pronunciation

Pronunciation is a crucial aspect of communication, particularly when listening. Students' ability to pronounce words determines whether they have good listening skills or not. Listening skills are crucial in foreign language communication; however, pronunciation is also an important component of listening. To begin, the most important listening skill is the ability to distinguish between English pronunciations. Furthermore, if the pronunciation is not standard, it is easy for misunderstandings to occur. Moreover, due to mispronunciation, students are unable to recognize familiar words. According to Gilakjani (2012), learners with good English pronunciation are likely to be understood even if they make errors in other areas, whereas learners with poor English pronunciation will not be understood even if their grammar is perfect.

In fact, students who are good at pronouncing will be able to express themselves confidently and even hear the exact message from others. Listeners must develop the critical skill of recognizing key information. As a result, incorrect pronunciation makes it difficult to communicate with others. Pronunciation should therefore be prioritized in order to become a good English listener or to succeed in learning foreign languages. Notably, most students frequently struggle with pronunciation. Their mother tongue influences their pronunciation when they practice pronouncing an English word, making them sound unclear and unnatural. The main difficulty in learning pronunciation is due to the difference in sound system between English and mother tongue. In other words, learning to pronounce a second language means developing new pronunciation habits and overcoming the bias of the first language, according to Cook (1996).

Furthermore, stress and intonation are involved in pronunciation. According to Yagang (1994), listeners become accustomed to the voices they frequently hear. Listeners who have been exposed to standard British or American accents will struggle to understand other accents. In fact, the various accents make it difficult for students to listen effectively. The listeners have a tendency to become familiar with the accents that they mostly listen to, writes Yagang (1994). Listeners who have been exposed to standard British or American accents will have difficulty understanding other accents. This causes students to be perplexed when learning English listening. According to Munro and Derwing (1995), too much stressed speech can result in a significant decrease in comprehension. Furthermore, 66% of listeners consider the speaker's voice to be one of the most important factors influencing listening comprehension. Goh (1999). Accents, both native and non-native, can cause serious listening comprehension issues. This will disrupt the entire listening comprehension process while also creating a strange feeling of accent that will make listeners unable to understand. Furthermore, intonation is as important as both pronunciation and stress. Intonation helps to convey many meanings, implications, or situations that go beyond the actual meaning of the words in the sentence. In fact, the meaning of a sentence in context is determined by intonation. Students can infer the speaker's ideas and feelings based on the context and the speaker's rising and falling intonation. When a speaker's intonation changes during a conversation, the listener becomes confused. Confusion arises as a result of different intonation, which causes the same sentence to have different meanings. What's more, one of the reasons why listening is a difficult skill to acquire may be related to various features of spoken language such as the use of intonation, tone of voice, rhythm, and so on, according to Wei (2004). To avoid misunderstandings, students should learn to control their intonation properly.

To summarize, pronunciation, accents, and intonation are the barriers that cause students' listening skills to fail.

2.3.3 Grammar

Grammar is another major impediment to students' ability to listen. One of the findings of a study conducted by Meklafi and Nagaratnam (2011) was that students could recall grammar rules but had difficulty applying them in communication. Then comes reality. According to the stated statement, the student can recall the material but cannot apply it to actual communication. Wikipedia reports that English grammar is the process by which meaning is encoded into words in the English language. This includes the structure of individual words, phrases, clauses, and sentences, as well as the structure of entire texts. Grammar is the foundation of a language that students must understand. It enables students to distinguish the meaning of each word and sentence in a given situation, allowing them to comprehend precisely what speakers express during the listening process. The learners' difficulties include knowing English rules and memorizing English terms in order to create a correct sentence form. Another issue is that when the passive voice contains complex tense-aspects, understanding the syntactic constituent can be difficult. In general, no one can deny grammar's superiority in the listening section; however, students frequently fail to pay attention to grammar because they believe it is not as important as the four main skills, and as a result, they frequently make mistakes in the listening section. Speaking, writing, and even listening skills are all important. Students frequently struggle or do not understand what the speaker is saying when listening to some new or similar grammatical structures. So, we should be concerned with how grammar relates to what we want to say or write, particularly when listening.

In short, grammar is one of the most difficult aspects of the listening process for students.

2.3.4 Length and speech rate

The length and speech rate are also the elements that make students worried in listening. When students listen to long parts and retain all information, their level has a significant impact. Listening for longer than three minutes is difficult for lower-level students. Learners will be less tired and have an easier time understanding short

listening passages, according to Azmi et al (2014). Too much listening can cause students to miss information, become confused, and pause for a few seconds during the listening process. As a result, listening is ineffective. Second, the listener has no control over the rate at which the speaker speaks. The biggest issue with listening comprehension is that the listener has no control over how fast the speaker speaks. According to Underwood (1989), the students absolutely encounter certain difficulties in listening comprehension because they lack control over the speed at which the speakers speak and speed can make listening passage difficult. Students may struggle to understand second language words if speakers speak too quickly. In this situation, listeners are not able to control the speed of speakers and this can create critical problems with listening comprehension. Furthermore, listeners lack a broad vocabulary. The speaker may use words that the listener is unfamiliar with. Furthermore, the listener may be unfamiliar with the context. At the same time, the rate of speech varies from speaker to speaker, from age to age, from dialect to dialect, from context to context, and from occasion to occasion. Listeners may find it easier to communicate if they share a common understanding and are familiar with the text. In fact, even though students are similar to the words that are spoken, it is very difficult for students to comprehend what is going on when they listen to the text at a rapid speech rate. Slow speech rates are often said to be easier to understand than natural ones; this allows students enough time to process the stream of information at a slower transfer rate. According to Flowerder and Miller (1996), their subjects unanimously rated speed of delivery as one of the greatest obstacles to understanding.

In short, the length and speed of speech are also impediments to listening.

2.3.5 Motivation

Motivation is essential for language learning success. According to Dörnyei (2011), motivation is more important in the second language learning process. Even the most gifted individuals will be unable to achieve their long-term language and listening goals if they are not sufficiently motivated. On the other hand, high motivation can compensate for significant deficiencies in both linguistic aptitude and academic conditioning. Motivation is a significant factor that influences their listening. According to Littlewood (1984) states that motivation is the most important factor in determining whether a listener begins a task at all. Listening learners require motivation to support and improve their abilities. Being a good listener requires appropriate motivation.

Language learning requires motivation, and when a student learns to listen, he or she must be stimulated. According to Cheng and Dörnyei (2007), motivation is thought to act as a learning engine, propelling students to overcome the difficulties encountered in learning a foreign language. However, students are often unmotivated because the topic is irrelevant, the activities are inappropriate for the student's level, or the lesson content is unrelated to the student's reality. As a result, we must try to avoid subjects that are boring or overly theoretical, instead focusing on subjects that we believe our students will be interested in, that appear relevant to reality, and that can arouse or stimulate them. Furthermore, not all students approach learning to listen positively. Students who do not major in English, in particular, often ignore English listening skills because they believe it is not a specialized subject and is not required. Sometimes the period of time we are forced to listen without participating can cause memory problems or even fatigue, so that we end up not listening with our full attention understanding anymore, writes Byrne (1988). As a result, students who are unmotivated to learn English will only focus on how to pass the course rather than how to master English.

To summarize, motivation is one of the most significant barriers that students must overcome when learning to listen.

2.4 Previous studies

In the process of English proficiency, students are affected by many obstacles, especially in learning listening English. The previous studies below will be a good evidence for the affirmation.

The first study that has to be discussed is Nguyen's (2017) investigation into the "Difficulties in English Listening of Majored Sophomores at Tay Do University" with the aim of assisting these students in clearly identifying their difficulties with English hearing. The participants are sophomore bachelor course 10 (2015–2019) English majors at Tay Do University. A questionnaire is the main tool utilized in the research process. The study's findings indicated that pupils had issues with pronunciation, previous knowledge, and psychological aspects.

Similar research was undertaken by Bui (2019), who published "A Study on Second-Year English Major Students' Difficulties in Listening Comprehension at HPU." An investigation into the listening issues and listening

skills of thirty second-year English majors at Hai Phong Private University was done for this study. Data was gathered through interviews and questionnaires. The study's findings showed that not practicing listening skills and not being exposed to a variety of listening resources were the key factors contributing to listening issues. The results of this study will be useful to those who create listening materials for university students.

Trinh (2020) conducted another study titled "A Study on the Difficulties in English Listening Skill for the Second-Year Students in the English Faculty at Thuong Mai University and Some Suggested Solutions". This study was done to look into the listening issues sophomores at Thuong Mai University were having. Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used in this investigation. 100 students in K54N classrooms were distributed the questionnaire in order to gather data. Conclusions about students' attitudes and subjective and objective hearing difficulties in English were drawn from the results. In order to assist students in finding solutions, the researcher also offered comments and recommendations.

The research "A Study of English Listening Problems and Listening Proficiency of Business at Bangkok University" was carried out by Anadapong (2011). Examining the listening skills and issues of thirty pupils in English is the goal. Data collection methods included a questionnaire, an IELTS exam, and an interview. According to the findings, the listening text is what primarily causes hearing issues. Lack of practice with listening skills and limited exposure to various listening materials, on the other hand, were the characteristics that most frequently contributed to listening issues.

Yousif (2006) has made reference to this in his study "Listening Comprehension Difficulties as Perceived." The study looked into the difficulties 50 first-year English majors at Almajmah College of Education had understanding lectures. Short open-ended questionnaires and interviews were used to gather the data. An index of the linguistic, conceptual, discourse, auditory, environmental, and psychological factors that obstruct efficient comprehension is provided by the analysis. The findings were reviewed in relation to several barriers to comprehension. Listener factors, speaker factors, and text factors make up the three main categories.

In conclusion, listening practice is not an easy process, students will have to face some difficulties in listening. Although more and more research is supporting the exploration of English listening difficulties to improve foreign language ability, many researchers are still uncertain about its effectiveness. Therefore, in this study, the research explores the listening difficulties encountered by non-English majors at Tay Do University. Thanks to this, these students not only recognize their obstacles, but also overcome and develop their communication skills.

3. SEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research aims

The study aimed to investigate difficulties in listening of non-English major students at Tay Do University. Through the research results, students can be aware of their obstacles in listening to English and select the most suitable method to improve their listening skills.

3.2 Research questions

This study was conducted in order to answer the following question:

What are some difficulties in English listening that English non-majored at Tay Do University often encounter?

3.3 Research design

The research was carried out in order to answer research questions and test hypotheses. Tay Do University non-English majors are the subjects of this study. To determine what factors caused listening difficulties for non-English majors at Tay Do University, a qualitative tool was used. Students were given interview questions in order to poll their opinions. In addition, it was used to ensure the study's reliability. Finally, the interview data were analyzed and conclusions were drawn.

3.4 Research participants

The research was undertaken with the participation of 30 non-English majors from two classes of Business Administration 16A and Banking and Finance 16 of Tay Do University. Participants were between the ages of 20 and 23. Furthermore, the vast majority of them were from rural areas and have been studying English for at least six years. However, because of the influence of the previous high school listening program, their background knowledge was very similar, and they did not have many opportunities to practice. For this reason, when they

entered Tay Do University, their listening skills were still limited and faced many difficulties in listening and learning English.

3.5 Research instruments

The two main tools in this research included interviews and observations. The interview was used to collect basic information from students as well as to investigate issues that impede students' English listening abilities. The researcher also used observation to confirm the hypothesis's veracity, making the study more reliable.

3.5.1 Interview

In order to research more specific and objective, the interview papers were delivered to 30 non-English majored students who are randomly selected in different classes at Tay Do University, including 3 questions referring to difficulties in learning English- listening.

3.5.2 Observation

The use of observation helps to make the study more realistic. The researcher attended approximately two of the participants' English listening sessions. The researcher noticed the difficulties that participants face while observing their performance. Following that, the researcher took notes, which would aid in the research's accuracy.

4. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Listening is one of the most important skills for students majoring in English language. However, if you want to listen to English competently, learners must try their best to overcome all their stress. Because of this, non-English majors of Tay Do University face a lot of trouble with listening problems related to vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, background knowledge, as well as other elements other factors such as motivation, length and speed rate.

4.1 Vocabulary

Difficulty related to listening skills is a common problem faced by most students. In particular, the limitation of vocabulary is the first problem that causes students' listening skills to fail. This makes students limited in understanding the content and misses important information in the listening content. In other words, a word does not have one meaning but can have many meanings. Learners often get confused when choosing the right word in different contexts. Moreover, when they don't use the vocabulary often, it's easy to forget words. That leads when they discover an unknown word, they start looking up the meaning of that word and as a result sometimes miss the later part of the listening.

4.2 Pronunciation

Besides, students also have difficulty in listening due to poor pronunciation. They will easily mishear if the speaker pronounces it incorrectly or incorrectly. Furthermore, their mother tongue affects their pronunciation, making them sound unclear and unnatural. In fact, when exposed to the voices of new people or other native speakers, it is difficult for students to listen effectively and not even understand what the speaker is saying. Furthermore, students are faced with many different accents and intonations. Students can infer the speaker's ideas and feelings based on the speaker's context and intonation. When the speaker's intonation changes during the conversation, the listener gets confused. The confusion arises due to different intonation, which causes the same sentence to have different meanings. To avoid misunderstandings, students should learn to control their intonation properly. Not only that, length is also a determining factor when listening. Students will easily get tired and miss a lot of information when listening to a talk that is too long.

4.3 Grammar

Moreover, poor grammar knowledge is also a big barrier in the listening process. It is easy for students to misunderstand the content of the listening text. They often have trouble hearing because they have to think about a lot grammar structure. They can remember learned materials but cannot apply them in communication. Furthermore, students often have difficulty or do not understand what the speaker is saying when they hear some new or similar grammatical structures. Sometimes they even apply Vietnamese structures or translate word to word that lead to misunderstandings in their conversation.

4.4 Basic background knowledge

Background knowledge plays an important role in improving learners' language skills. If students have little or no background knowledge of what they want to hear, the specific implications or implications of a new topic or field without background knowledge, it is difficult for them to listen effectively.

4.5 Length and speed rate

The length and speed rate are the difficulties for students when listening. A long listening lesson will make it difficult for students to concentrate on memorizing the content of the listening lesson, even forgetting important information. Moreover, students will easily be confused by someone who speaks too fast. Failure to keep up with the listening speed also affects the speaker's reception of information.

4.6 Motivation

Last but not least, motivation is also an important factor affecting students' listening ability. Most students who are not motivated to learn English will only focus on how to pass the course rather than how to become fluent in English. They easily get bored and want to give up when they do not understand what the speaker wants to convey. This leads to students' listening skills become narrow and limited. It can be said that the student's motivation determines the ability to hear good or bad.

In general, based on the issues mentioned in the survey, the author hopes that this study will help students recognize some difficulties in listening skills and thereby find a better method to learn to listen to English effectively.

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