

FACTORS AFFECTING TO LISTENING OF MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION LEARNERS AT TAY DO UNIVERSITY IN VIET NAM

Nga H.T. NGUYEN, Tay Do University, Vietnam

ABSTRACT

Listening is said to be an indispensable subject which partly contributes to the success of learning English and daily communication. It is also the subject that many learners usually face difficulties in learning. The research was conducted to figure out common factors affecting to listening of MBA (Master of Business Administration) learners at Tay Do University. Statistical data was collected from eighty participants. Questionnaire and interview paper were used as instruments. The findings would reveal that there were linguistic factors (pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar) external factors (the format, the content and the environment) and psychological factors (anxiety, lack of concentration and lack of motivation). Thanks to results, some solutions would be suggested for the learners' improvement.

Key words: *listening, English, master of business administration, university*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale

English has been widely considered as an important language which is used all over the world. Flanking with the development of the economy and the raised demand of the high standard workforce, having good English proficiency is an essential condition to get a promising future for many people. Nowadays, English initiates becoming the international language because it is applied in many fields as education, business, economy, etc. It is one of the necessary requirements for getting a good job or studying in higher education.

There are four basic skills in learning English as speaking, reading, listening and writing. These skills have mutual relation. Proficiency in each skill is necessary and the listening skill holds a mainly important role. Among the basic skills we need for success in life, listening is primary. Developmentally, we listen before we learn to speak, read or write. Listening is a prominent skill which plays a significant role in communication. When we communicate with another person, we listen first and then answer the information that speakers want to hear. The primacy of listening is creating and developing our relationships with one another. Listening establishes us in our life situation and enables us to maintain meaningful relationship with family, friends, etc. In fact, if there is no listening, people find it hard to share their thoughts, feelings or ideas with others. In contrast, if people do not understand clearly what is saying, no reply to speakers be sent and the conversation will be interrupted. That is the reason why listening is a subject which cannot be neglected for English learning learners.

According to Vandergrift (1997), listening skill requires hypothesizing, prediction, generalizing, revising and checking for the listening inputs. Most of learners face some difficulties in listening because they cannot understand what the speaker says. Unlike reading, while readers can go back to the text any time they want, listeners have no chance of going back to the part they may pass. In fact, MBA learners at Tay Do University still face difficulties. There are three common factors affecting to listening. Firstly, it is related to linguistics: pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. Secondly, external factors are considered as the reason causing learners' listening problems as the format, the content and the environment. In addition, some psychological factors can also affect to listening skill: anxiety, lack of confidence and lack of motivation.

This research was conducted to figure out some common factors affecting to listening of MBA learners at Tay Do University. Then, learners can realize their difficulties. And, basing on the difficulties stated, learners can overcome their problems in listening and improve their listening ability in learning English and in communicating as well.

1.2 Research aim and research question

Aims of the study

The research aimed at investigating the factors affecting to listening of MBA learners at Tay Do University to help them recognize their own problems. Besides, this study was expected that learners could restrict their difficulties and improve their listening skill positively.

Research question

The research was conducted to deal with the research question, "What are common factors affecting to listening process of MBA learners at Tay Do University?"

1.3 The significance of study

This study was expected to help learners realize their difficulties in listening, particularly MBA learners at Tay Do University. In addition, basing on the problems mentioned, some useful solutions would be recommended to solve the problems to help learners improve listening skill.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The definitions of listening

In daily conversation, there is an interaction between the speaker and the listener. In fact, many people think that the conversation will be successful if they use a lot of information to communicate. Actually, communication will fail without the existence of listening. It helps people understand what is said so that they can have an appropriate reply to each other. Cross (1998) states that, listening skill is very important, without listening skills, no communication can be achieved. Also, Nunan (1998) asserts that, listening is the basic skill in language learning. Without listening skill, learners will never learn to communicate effectively. In fact, over 50% of time that learners spend functioning in a foreign language will be devoted to listening.

The term of listening can be defined in several ways. Underwood (1989) says that, listening is the activity of paying attention to and trying to get meaning from something we hear. Listening appears as a challenge in the process of learning English. It is far more difficult than many people can image because it involves an active process of deciphering and constructing meaning form both verbal and non-verbal messages. (Nunan, 1998).

Listening is different from hearing. Hearing and listening are two very distinct activities. Barthes (1985) claims that, hearing is a physiological phenomenon; listening is a psychological act. We can understand that hearing is passive and listening is active. Hearing is a physical function of biology and listening is a mental function of internal behavior. Listening is done with the head, eyes, heart, and gut. Listening is the understood element of effective communication. Listening can be understood on three levels: alerting, deciphering and understanding of how the sound is produced and how the sound affects to listeners. (Barthes, 1985). People do not listen well for many reasons. One reason is that they cannot concentrate. Their thoughts generally wander during speeches and conversations. Other people learn better visually and they do not take in information as well through auditory means. Also, other professionals like to take attention from a speaker whenever possible. Some people only care about their own fulfillment and are basically insensitive to the needs of others in a conversation.

In nutshell, there are numerous definitions by many linguists, but they share the same opinions that listening is the process of receiving and interpreting information. It enables us to maintain meaningful relations with others. Listening, therefore, functions to serve basic human needs. Specifically, listening serves the purpose of learning, establishing and maintaining relationships and is crucial in many other important activities each day.

2.2 The important of listening

Listening plays an important role in daily communication and is considered as one of the most fundamental language skills in learning English. The reason is that communication is a process of exchanging information and interaction between speakers and hearers. Mendelsohn (1994) analyzes that, of the total time spent on communicating, listening takes up 40-50%; speaking, 25-30%; reading, 11-16%; and writing, about 9%. Through listening, people giant a large portion of their education, information, and understanding of the world and human affairs and so on. There is no doubt that an average individual spends the most of the time in listening. Moreover, in daily communication, Underwood (1989) agrees that if learners do not learn to listen

effectively, they will be unable to take part in oral communication. Another idea, Rost (1994) points out that, listening is vital in language classroom because it provides input for learners. Without understanding input at right level, any learning simply cannot begin. Listening is thus fundamental to speaking. It reveals that the good listening comprehension skills of learners help them achieve the effectiveness in communicative situations. Therefore, it is undeniable that listening is an importance matter in learning a foreign or second language.

In short, in language learning, listening skill is an indispensable skill that learners cannot ignore. If they listen well, they will be confident and get motivation when learning a new language. Listening is a key factor to the success of learning another language, especially in studying English. That is the reason why learners have to pay attention to this skill.

2.3 Factors affecting to listening

In the process of learning language, listening is not an easy subject. It causes many obstacles for learners. Being unable to listen well leads to the lack of confidence in communication. This is also the problems that MBA learners at Tay Do University face when learning this subject. According to Yagang (1994), the problems in listening are accompanied with the four following factors: the message, the speaker, the listener and the physical setting. Furthermore, a number of researches have been carried out to pick out the problem in listening. As Flowerdew & Miller (1996) assume that the problems of the learners in listening were for the speed of delivery, new terminology and concept, difficulty in focusing and the physical environment. In addition, Ardila (2013) reveals that factors affecting to listening skills are: motivation, paralinguistic features (such as the accent, noise, rate of delivery, pronunciation, and intonation), known vocabulary, concentration, teacher's methodology, use of materials and learner's background. In this study, the factors affecting to listening difficulties are grouped into three main parts: factors related to linguistics (pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar), external factors (the format, the content and the environment) and the psychological factors (anxiety, lack of concentrate and lack of motivation).

2.3.1 Linguistic factors

Pronunciation

Pronunciation plays an indispensable role for learners who want to master in both speaking and listening. This means that if learners care much about their pronunciation, they will be proficient in listening. Pronunciation has a positive effect on learning a second language and learners can gain the skills they need for effective communication in English. Pronunciation is viewed as a sub-skill of speaking. Generally, if we want to change the way a learner pronounces words, we have to change the way they think about the component sounds of those words. This goes not just for individual sounds, but for bigger elements of speech, such as syllables, stress patterns and rhythm, etc. Learners with good English pronunciation are likely to be understood even if they make errors in other areas, whereas learners with bad pronunciation will not be understood, even if their grammar is perfect. (Gilakjani, 2012). As a result, pronouncing words incorrectly may cause a serious consequence - that is misunderstood among people. Furthermore, learners cannot recognize some familiar words when listening if they have mispronunciation of those words.

In addition, intonation and accent are not less important than pronunciation. Intonation in English might convey a speaker's involvement in a conversation as well as desire to take the run of talk or leave the conversation. Intonation is a significant feature in English. When learning English, intonation usually makes learners confused with communication because different intonations can make the same sentence have various meanings; as Boyle (1984) shares: the reason lies often in differences of stress and intonation sufficiently large to spoil comprehension. Moreover, accent is another vital element in linguistic knowledge which has a strong influence on studying English listening. 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.

Overall, it is undoubted that pronunciation is a main key leading to the success of listening skills. Therefore, learners should practice pronunciation and be aware of different sounds and features to achieve accuracy in listening comprehension.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary plays an important role in language learning. Without sufficient vocabulary, people cannot communicate and express their feelings. Hence, vocabulary is the most important factor effecting learners' listening ability. Thornbury (2002) says that, without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed. In fact, when learners listen to a conversation, they cannot understand what the speakers say if they do not have vocabulary. Vocabulary is one of important things to be taught in learning a foreign language. Chastain (1988) states that, the lack of needed vocabulary is the most common cause of

learners' inability to say what they want to say during communication activities. In addition, Underwood (1989) adds, for people listening to a foreign language, an unknown word can be like a suddenly dropped barrier causing them to stop and think about the meaning of the word and thus making them miss the next part of the speech. In addition, learners do not use the words they learn regularly, so they are easy to forget them. This causes a problem that they cannot recognize the words they have learned before when facing a text of listening.

In short, vocabulary is considered as the fundamental factor of learning English, especially in listening skill. Thus, having a sufficient vocabulary is an advantage for those who want to become good listeners.

Grammar

Besides pronunciation and vocabulary, grammatical structure holds an important role in listening skill. William (2005) states that, grammar is a study of the structure of the language and describes the way of putting words together to make meaningful sentences. Grammatical structure is an instrumental tool that enables the speakers to create a wide variety of sentences and equip them with the necessary instruction as how to combine these sentences to their best purpose. However, learners usually meet grammatical errors.

Grammar is the whole system and structure of language in general, usually taken as consisting of syntax and morphology (including inflections) and sometimes also phonology and semantics. In other words, grammar is rules of words and how words combine together in a language. Therefore, when approaching a new language like English, learners must start to study grammar. If learners have good knowledge of grammar, they will study English well by using different and appropriate structures in forming sentences. It also helps them recognize sentence structures and understand easily what speakers are saying during the process of listening.

In addition, the grammatical rules of the English language are not the same as Vietnamese grammar, so it is difficult for learners to use English grammar masterfully. Learners frequently make mistakes because of the fact that their mother tongue's grammar has a strong influence on learning another new language. This leads to the intervention of their mother tongue's grammar to foreign language's structures. Sometimes, the words in some sentences are the same, however the arrangement of those words is obviously dissimilar. The differences of sentence structures will result in the variety of meaning and implications. Hence misinterpretation of the meaning that the speakers actually convey due to the lack of grammar knowledge is also a common problem occurring very often when learners learn English listening.

To sum up, grammar is the important factor that cannot be omitted if learners want to be master in a listening skill.

2.3.2 External factors

According to Yildiz & Albay (2015), lecturers make sure that the level of the material is in compatible with the level of learners. Also, all grammatical structures and vocabulary in listening texts are taught beforehand. Moreover, the difficulty of listening texts must be at learners' level of understanding and listening texts must absorb attention of learners. Listening texts with interesting topics motivate learners which will finally lead to achievement. When learners show interest in the listening topics, their commitment will be high and they will show better performance. Furthermore, speed of delivery must be slightly slower than normal speech. When the delivery is fast, learners cannot control the meanings of utterances in the speech. The accent of speakers in listening texts influences comprehension so native accents should be preferred.

Environment also has an important role in listening. Environmental factors, such as noise, and temperature can cause learners to focus on their attention. In listening class, when learners are listening to a talk or a lecture, but they cannot listen well because of the noise outside. Noise as a whirring of fan, a whisper of beside friends can interfere to the listening process. Moreover, temperature also affects to listening. If a room is very dark, listeners will be sleepy, just as the too warm or cool room can enhance the awareness of learners' physical. In general, environment has an influence to learners. Besides, many people in the listening class make learners dis-concentrate. They do not listen well in crowded places. In addition, adequate instrument and the participants themselves also important factors affecting to the final listening results.

In conclusion, external factors are important in learning listening, the institutes as well as learners should prepare all carefully before having a listening texts to get better listening results.

2.3.3 Psychological factors

Psychology obstacle is the most complicated factor causing many difficulties in both listening and speaking English of many learners. Psychological obstacles sometimes debilitate the ability of receiving the language input. When a learner is exposed to a new language, his first internal hurdles are posed by the individual's emotion barriers. Indeed, listeners with bad mood find it difficult to concentrate on listening text. Moreover, learners usually feel stressful and embarrassed when talking with English speaking people so they cannot listen

clearly and lack of attention. Brand (2010) states that, listening is the skill needed by a learner to focus on the lesson for a period of time without allowing one's thought to be distracted.

In addition, Young (1990) recommends that, in most of literature on language learning anxiety, learners have reported that listening in the foreign language produces the most anxiety. In reality, anxiety occurs when learners feel to face with a task that is too difficult or unfamiliar. This kind of psychology creates a challenge to learners' listening ability. As a result, they tend to become worried if they fail to understand a particular word, and they will be discouraged by the failure.

Lack of concentration is also indispensable affecting the whole of listening process. It can be difficult for learners to concentrate in a foreign language. In listening comprehension, even shortest break in attention can impact seriously comprehension; a few learners feel listening as tiring; it demands an enormous amount of effort to follow the meaning. It is defined that when a person feels tired or stressful, he or she will not concentrate. That leads listeners' ability to ineffective listening. Learning listening a foreign language is not an easy process. It requires learners to pay much attention.

In addition, Nunan (1999) elaborates the causes of the learners' lack of motivation e.g. uninspired teaching, boredom, lack of perceived relevance of materials and lack of knowledge about the goals of the instructional program. Moreover, Lightbown and Spada (1993) add that teachers should make classrooms places where the content is interesting and relevant to their age and level of ability, where the learning goals are challenging yet manageable and clear, and where the atmosphere is supportive and non-threatening, teachers could make a positive contribution to learners' motivation to learn. Therefore, learners need to be motivated and find interesting in learning for themselves. If learners are well motivated and have the support of teachers, they are sure to succeed.

To sum up, psychological obstacle is the drawback of almost learners in learning English listening subject. Therefore, learners need to overcome it in order to study well.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Design

This was the combination of quantitative and qualitative research. The instruments were questionnaire and interview paper. The data were collected through the questionnaire from eighty MBA learners. Moreover, to make the research more specific and objective, ten learners were randomly selected in order to answer the interview questions.

3.2 Participant

The participants involved in research were eighty MBA learners at Tay Do University. They speak Vietnamese as their mother tongue and English is considered as their foreign language. They usually listened to some topics relating to business as 1. Entrepreneur, 2. Management Role, 3. Planning and Strategy, 4. Decision Making, 5. Personnel, 6. Motivation, 7. Brand and Trade, 8. Production, 9. Marketing, and 10. Research & Development. In addition, the participants practiced some extensive topics given by their teachers in class, they listened to the short/long conversations or lectures, then found the main ideas, details, stressed words, took notes on specific information and filled in the blanks.

3.3 Instrument

Questionnaire and interview questions were the instruments of this research. The questionnaire was used to find out the difficulties in listening of MBA learners. To get higher reliability, along with the questionnaire, interview was another helpful tool used for collecting information. By answering the questions on the interview, the attitude of learners towards English listening skill could be revealed. It also pointed out the learners' obstacles when listening and got more opinions which were essential in the research process.

The questionnaire with the total of 8 questions and 29 statements with 5 points scale: (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) neutral, (4) disagree, (5) strongly disagree. It was written in English with careful and clear instructions as well as guidance to make sure that respondents could easily understand and give appropriate answers. They were carefully prepared and classified into the following groups:

Table 1: The gist of questionnaire

Question/Statement	Summary of the question's/statement's content
From 1 to 8	Learners' background

From 9 to 23	Linguistic factors
From 24 to 31	External factors
From 32 to 37	Psychological factors

The interview paper consisted of four open – ended questions which mentioned to difficulties of studying listening and some suggested solutions for those problems. Learners could be free to share their ideas.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

After collecting all the necessary information and ideas from eighty MBA learners by the questionnaire and interview, the data were analyzed. The findings were split into two groups: The results from the questionnaire and the results from the interview.

4.1.1 Results from questionnaire

The findings of the questionnaire were classified into two basic items consisting of learners' background, and learners' difficulties in listening.

a. Learners' background

Learners' favorite skills

In learning English, learners need to improve many skills together by regularly practicing them so that they can use English effectively. Speaking, reading and listening were common skills that many learners liked best while writing was the skill that learners did not like.

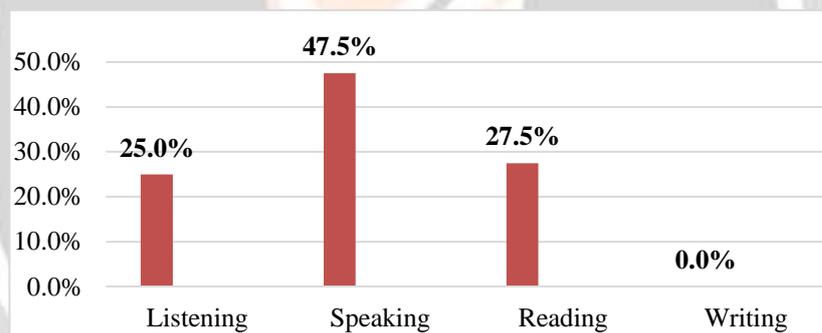


Figure 1: The skill that learners like

According to figure 1, the highest column (47.5%) was speaking. This result showed that they were very active and passionate to communicate with speaking English people. Reading was another skill that 27.5% learners liked. Some learners liked reading skill to enhance their knowledge, but they did not like practicing. In contrast, it could be seen that 25% learners who liked listening skill, it was quite lower than speaking and reading. It meant they were not interested in listening skill or they did not practice it. It proved that listening skill was not a favorable skill. That was the reason why learners usually encountered difficulties when learning English listening.

Learners' attitude towards learning English

English has become an international language; it is also a useful tool for job requirements in many countries around the world in general and in Vietnam in particular. Actually, learning English is very important for the learners who want to have a good job in the future. Nowadays, most of jobs demand some qualifications that relate to English. Therefore, survey the attitude towards the importance of English is helpful.

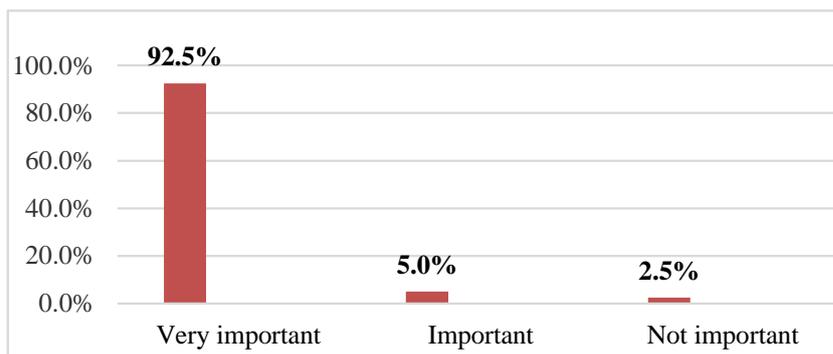


Figure 2: The importance of learning English

Looking at figure 2, the number of learners who thought that English was very important up 92.5%. The percentage shows that English becomes very important nowadays. This means that learners' awareness of learning English has been increased. English will be the language that people use to communicate with other people in the world. Learners have many chances to connect and cooperate with foreign partners in the open door policy.

Learners' self-evaluation on listening ability

Learners' level of listening skill is various due to the differences about the amount of years they studied English and their purposes when studying English. Let's see figure 3.

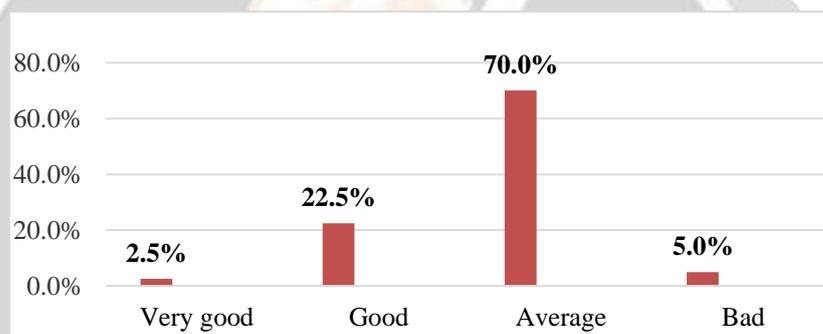


Figure 3: Learners' self-evaluation on listening ability

70% of learners said that their listening skill was at average. Besides, 22.5% believed that they were good and only two learners thought that they were good at listening (2.5%). In contrast, 5.00% admitted that their listening skill were bad. This was reliable evidence proving that MBA learners had many difficulties in learning listening subject.

In addition, it was recognized that there was an existence of another element affecting learners' listening skill. That was the frequency of self-study listening at home. 60% learners sometimes studied and practiced listening skill at home, 25% often, and 15% rarely improved their listening skill at home. It means that they still meet difficulties in listening if they do not work hard to practice listening or self-study at home.

b. Learners' difficulties in learning English listening

In learning English listening, learners had a lot of difficulties. They were classified into 3 main parts relating to linguistic, external and psychological factors. The figure below showed more details.

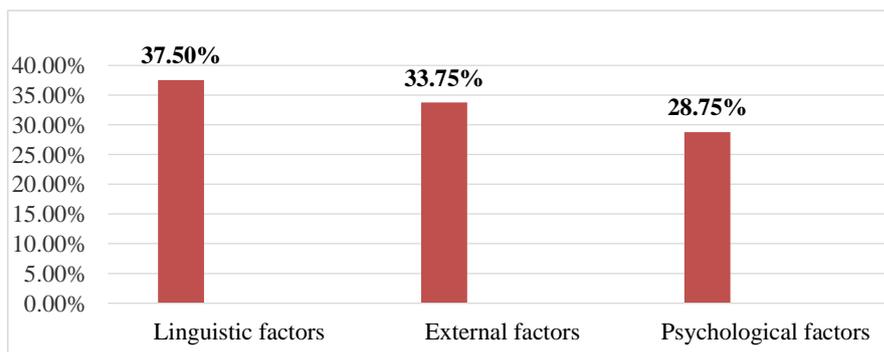
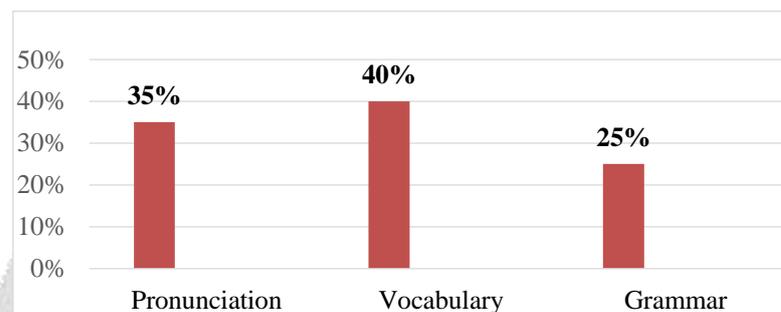


Figure 4: Factors affecting to listening

In figure 4, the highest percentage was that difficulties related to linguistics (37.5%). Almost learners had difficulties about pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. The second difficulties were external factors as the format, the content and the environment (33.75%). And 28.75% had a difficulty related to psychological factors as anxiety, lack of concentration and lack of motivation. Let's go through each factor.

Difficulties related to linguistics

In figure 4, we could see difficulties related to linguistics had the highest percentages (37.5%). They are pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. Let's find more details about each difficulty.

**Figure 5:** Linguistic factors

In figure 5, 40% chose that vocabulary was their difficulties in listening. Learners accepted they had a lot of difficulties with vocabulary. They could not recognize familiar words, or some unfamiliar words, structures then they stopped to listen and focused on these words so they missed the blank and the main idea. Another difficulty was about pronunciation, 35% had a gap about pronunciation, intonation and accent. Besides, grammar was another difficulty that learners had (25%). In English grammar, differences of sentence structures could result in the variety of meanings and implications, so learners found it difficult in listening process. Let's go through each factors.

Table 2: Difficulties in pronunciation

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
9. You often face many difficulties in learning listening because the speakers' pronunciation is not good.	20%	62.5%	12.5%	5%	0%
10. You cannot recognize some familiar words when listening because you have mispronunciation of those words.	0%	67.5%	25%	7.5%	0%
11. Intonation usually makes you confused when listening because different intonations can make the same sentence have various meanings.	12.5%	65%	17.5%	5%	0%
12. You often misunderstand the meaning of a sentence if the speaker changes his intonation.	10%	62.5%	22.5%	5%	0%
13. Unfamiliar accents of both native and non-native speakers make you encounter difficulty.	17.5%	52.5%	25%	5%	0%
14. It is difficult to distinguish word which was mentioned when hearing a new accent at first time.	15%	37.5%	32.5%	15%	0%

It can be seen in figure 5, pronunciation comprised 35% of the difficulties in listening – the second difficulties. The data in the table 2 showed that 62.5% agreed and 20% strongly agreed with statement 9, “You often face many difficulties in learning listening because the speakers' pronunciation is not good.” - the first choice of

many learners. 12.5% gave no comment on this statement and very few of learner (5%) chose disagreement since it was not their difficulties.

In statement 10, "You cannot recognize some familiar words when listening because you have mispronunciation of those words." 67.5% showed agreement; it led to the drawback that they were not able to recognize the spoken words, even those words were familiar with them. While 25% were neutral and 7.5% objected to the difficulties about misunderstanding about word pronunciation.

In statement 11, "Intonation usually makes you confused when listening because different intonations can make the same sentence have various meanings." 77.5% showed their agreement. 17.5% of learners said they did not have an ideas and very few of them (5%) disagreed.

In statement 12, "You often misunderstand the meaning of a sentence if the speaker changes his intonation." 22.5% gave no comment on this statement. Most of learners (72.5%) agreed that the intonation was the flavor which made spoken language had a sense of meaning (10% strongly agreed and 62.5% agreed). Nevertheless, 5% did not think so. No one strongly disagreed.

In statement 13, "Unfamiliar accents of both native and non-native speakers make you encounter difficulty." A majority of participants agreed that they would not imitate the accent (17.5% strongly agreed and 52.5% agreed). In contrast, 25% responded that they did not have idea with this statement and 5% thought this was not their difficulty. It meant that if listeners listened to French people speaking English, they would feel hard to understand them as they spoke English with native English speakers or if speakers had their accents, it was hard for learners distinguish some words in the listening tasks.

In statement 14, "It is difficult to distinguish word which was mentioned when hearing a new accent at first time." More than half of the learners (15% strongly agreed and 37.5 % agreed) found it difficult to recognize the words when being said in a strange accent. However, some learners found no difficulties while hearing a new accent for the first time (25% disagreed). Furthermore, 32.5% answered in the neutral state.

Table 3: Difficulties in vocabulary

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
15. Your vocabulary is not sufficient to understand what speakers say.	30%	43.75%	22.5%	3.75%	0%
16. Many words have more than one meaning and some meanings are not common use so you can get confused.	20%	62.5%	15%	2.5%	0%
17. You do not use the words you learn regularly, so you are easy to forget them.	20%	35%	40%	5%	0%
18. During listening, although some words sound familiar, it is difficult for you to realize their meaning immediately.	15%	60%	25%	0%	0%
19. You have a trend of listening word by word.	10%	57.5%	27.5%	5%	0%

It can be seen in figure 5, vocabulary accounted 35% of the difficulties in listening – the first difficulties. According to table 3, 73.75% agreed and strongly agreed with statement 15, "Your vocabulary is not sufficient to understand what speakers say." In addition, 22.5% had no idea. This showed that learners seriously lacked vocabulary in term of specialized terminology.

In statement 16, "Many words have more than one meaning and some meanings are not common use so you can get confused." The percentage of those who showed their agreement was 82.5% (20% strongly agreed and 62.5% agreed); many words had more than one meaning so they were really hard to recognize the suitable meaning in certain contexts. However, 15% did not have idea and 2.5% did not think this was their difficulties.

In addition, 55% agreed with statement 17, "You do not use the words you learn regularly, so you are easy to forget them." Besides, some learners did not give any idea with this statement (40%) and 5% said that they overcame the difficulties.

Additionally, in statement 18, "During listening, although some words sound familiar, it is difficult for you to realize their meaning immediately." 25% gave no comment and 60% agreed and 15% entirely gave strongly

agreement that sometimes the words they already studied but while listening they could not find the meaning of that ones in the context.

In statement 19, “You have a trend of listening word by word.” This was the last difficulty. A habit of listening to individual word was a common obstacle in studying listening which was approved by a high percentage of participants (67.5%). In fact, good listeners would not listen to all the words of the listening task, they may skip any part of it. There still were some learners who gave their opposite thinking against this statement. 27.5% said that they disagreed and 5% felt that it was not absolutely true.

Table 4: Difficulties in grammar

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
20. You cannot understand the new structures during the listening text.	15%	55%	17.5%	12.5%	0%
21. The differences of sentence structures will result in the variety of meanings and implications.	15%	52.5%	30%	2.5%	0%
22. You do not understand clearly the functions and rules of part of speech leading the wrong sentences.	17.5	40%	25%	17.5%	0%
23. You have a habit of translating all the information you heard into Vietnamese so you can miss the text.	12.5%	52.5%	27.5%	7.5%	0%

In figure 5, grammar accounted 25% - just a little of the difficulties in listening. In statement 20, “You cannot understand the new structures during the listening text.” The percentage of participants who concurred was almost three-fourths (55% agreed and 15% strongly agreed). 12.5% did not think so and 17.5% did not have any idea.

In statement 21, “The differences of sentence structures will result in the variety of meanings and implications.” 67.5% showed their agreement while 30% were neutral and 2.5% of them objected. This revealed that learners still had difficulties in grammatical structures as passive – active voices, tenses, etc.

In statement 22, “You do not understand clearly the functions and rules of part of speech leading the wrong sentences.” The number of learners who agreed was 40% while the strong agreement and disagreement was equal at 17.5%. Based on the results, it could be seen that discriminating among parts of speech of a word was a most basic skill of English learners; some learners had difficulties, but the others could deal with it.

In statement 23, “You have a habit of translating all the information you heard into Vietnamese so you can miss the text.” 52.5% of learners admitted that they did have a habit of translating all what they heard into their mother tongue. This statement also got 12.5% strongly agreed. On the other hand, the participants having the opposite thought were 7.5% and the participants who did not give any idea were 27.5%.

To sum up, after 15 statements about difficulties related linguistic factors, we could see that the most popular difficulty in pronunciation was “You often face many difficulties in learning listening because the speakers' pronunciation is not good.” accounting 82.5%; it was also the percentage of difficulty in vocabulary, “Many words have more than one meaning and some meanings are not common use so you can get confused.” While the highest problem in grammar (70%) was “You cannot understand the new structures during the listening text.”. Let's find some obstacles in external factors.

External factors

In figure 4, we can be seen difficulties related to external factors had the second percentages (33.75%). They are the format, the content and the environment. Let's find more details about each difficulty.

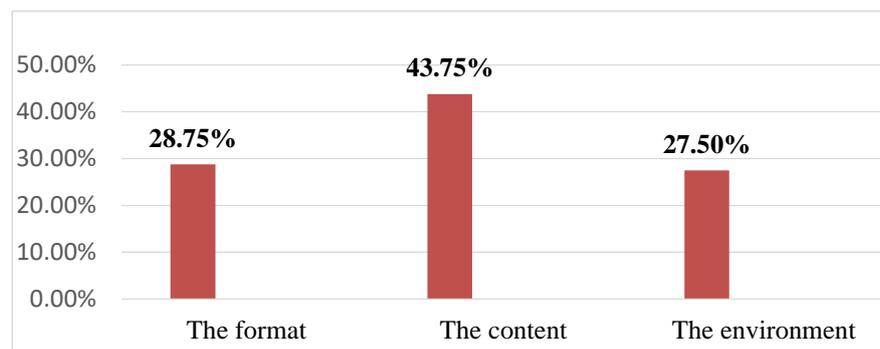


Figure 6: External factors

As we could see in figure 6, 43.75% had to face the content difficulties. The listening materials may contain a variety of fields in life or society. These may include words, phrases or terms unfamiliar to listeners. They were totally strange to them so it was such a hard job to listen when the messages were full of terminology. The second percentage was the format of the listening text (28.75%). The unfamiliar kinds of listening tasks were supposed to be obstacles to learners. Actually, if learners did not do the listening exercises before, they would be under pressure. Another element was the environment. If the recording was not good or learners did not have a comfortable place, it made up some troubles to learners. These elements limited learners' attention. The table below would present clearly.

Table 5: Difficulties relating to external factors

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
24. You find it is difficult when the format of the listening test is different from the one you have been exposed.	10%	55%	32.5%	2.5%	0%
25. If the speakers speak faster than normal, you may have difficulties to catch target words.	15%	60%	25%	0%	0%
26. You find it difficult to understand listening texts when the topic is unfamiliar to you.	6.25%	53.75%	12.50%	18.75%	8.75%
27. You cannot understand the main ideas or messages conveyed in unfamiliar topics.	13.75%	43.75%	32.5%	7.5%	2.5%
28. You cannot do the text well, if getting poor tape quality and poor equipment.	11.25%	63.75%	20%	5%	0%
29. The noise surrounding makes you not hear well that affects to your final results.	13.75%	43.75%	33.75%	8.75%	0%
30. You do not have a comfortable seat that affects to your listening.	18.75%	30%	43.75%	7.5%	0%
31. If your health is not good on the day taking the test, you cannot do the test well.	12.5%	36.25%	31.25%	20%	0%

When there were many structures or terms in unfamiliar formats, it ceased to make listeners feel bored and could not continue to pay attention to the listening test. In fact, 65% gave an idea of agreement and 15% entirely consented. Only 2.5% disagreed and 32.5% gave no comment with statement 24, "You find it is difficult when the format of the listening test is different from the one you have been exposed."

In statement 25, "If the speakers speak faster than normal, you may have difficulties to catch target words." 75% (15% strongly agreed and 60% agreed) reported that because of following up the fast speech rate of native speakers, they understood the message in the listening task very low or sometimes they did not understand what they heard. The rest was 25% having no idea. No one disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Another reason that made learners' capacity of understanding be limited was that the content of the listening texts. In statement 26, "You find it difficult to understand listening texts when the topic is unfamiliar to you." In

fact, 53.75% gave an idea of agreement and 6.25% entirely consented. While 27.5% chose disagreement and strongly disagreement. And 12.5% of participants gave no comment.

Additionally, 57.5% agreed and strongly agreed with statement 27, "You cannot understand the main ideas or messages conveyed in unfamiliar topics." Only 10% showed disapproval. From this result, it seemed reasonable to generalize that unfamiliar topics hindered the listening comprehension.

Another difficulty was the quality of the text recorded. In fact, 75% agreed and strongly agreed with statement 28, "You cannot do the text well, if getting poor tape quality and poor equipment." Only 5% disagreed and 20% did not give comment.

Besides the quality of the recording, 57.50% affirmed the statement 29 that, "The noise surrounding makes you not hear well that affects to your final results." Still 33.75% had no ideas about the other sound when taking listening task. And 8.75% said that it was not their problems.

Having a not good environment like getting an uncomfortable seat, or sitting in a bad room, etc. made learners difficult in listening; particularly, 18.75% strongly agreed and 30% agreed with statement 30, "You do not have a comfortable seat that affects to your listening." In contrast, some learners showed different ideas (7.5%), and the rest (43.75%) had no opinion.

Addition to all the external factors above, the health was one of the most important factor contributed to the well-done listening task. In fact, 48.75% verified that, "If your health is not good on the day taking the test, you cannot do the test well." But 20% did not consider it as their challenge, they could still focus on the task well. And 31.25% still kept neutral.

To sum up, after investigating 8 statements about external factors, we could find out that, "If the speakers speak faster than normal, you may have difficulties to catch target words." and "You cannot do the text well, if getting poor tape quality and poor equipment." were two big gaps of learners with 75% agreed and strongly agreed. These interrupted learners thought and caused difficulties in listening. Let's consider about psychological factors below.

Psychological factors

Along with the difficulties belonging to the linguistic factors and external factors, psychological obstacles were also the elements that blocked learners' ability. In figure 4, we could see difficulties related to psychological factors had the least percentages (28.75%). They were anxiety, lack of concentration and lack of motivation. Let's find more details about each difficulty.

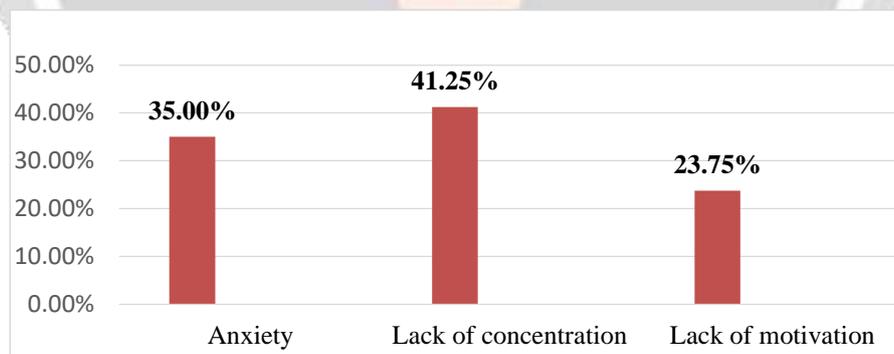


Figure 7: Psychological factors

Looking at the figure 7, lack of concentration was an important factor which affected listening with 41.25%. This proved that learners did not pay attention while taking listening tasks. Besides, learners' anxiety made them difficult; particularly, anxiety comprised 35% in total. Lack of motivation was the least of psychological problems (23.75%). These difficulties would be represented below.

Table 6: Difficulties relating to psychological factors

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
32. Anxiety makes you nervous and afraid that contributes to poor performance.	22.5%	58.75%	13.75%	5%	0%
33. Sometimes, you forget what you hear	23.75%	42.5%	26.25%	7.5%	0%

because of nervousness.					
34. Lack of concentration is a psychological barrier in learning listening.	28.75%	46.25%	17.5%	6.25%	1.25%
35. You cannot concentrate on listening in class and crowded place.	16.25%	40%	32.5%	5%	6.25%
36. You do not have good attitudes towards listening. Therefore, you cannot get any motivation to learn listening.	10%	20%	16.25%	36.25%	17.5%
37. You are not motivated by the teachers towards listening in English.	2.5%	20%	38.75%	33.75%	5%

Referring to table 6, in statement 32, "Anxiety makes you nervous and afraid that contributes to poor performance." The results revealed that approval was given by more than 80% of participants (with 22.5% strongly agreed and 58.75% agreed). In contrast, some learners thought anxiety did not make them nervous and afraid with 5%. And 13.75% showed neutral.

In statement 33, "Sometimes, you forget what you hear because of nervousness." Up to 66.25% thought that they met obstacles when getting nervous. 26.25% learners had the neutral option. 7.5% agreed that they could get the information well though nervous or nervousness was not their problems. No one strongly disagreed. Thus, memory problems would distract learners' attention from realizing the meaning of the task and they might miss the rest of the task.

In statement 34, "Lack of concentration is a psychological barrier in learning listening." In fact, 75% shared that lack of concentration made them get trouble while listening. Only 7.5% said that they still felt good. The other was 17.5% who gave no comment. This statement showed that lack of concentration of listening tasks was one of the main reasons why learners could not understand most of the talks.

In statement 35, "You cannot concentrate on listening in class and crowded place." Almost learners (16.25% strongly agreed and 40% agreed) who thought that they could not understand the spoken text if they were in a crowded class. In contrast, some of the learners disagreed with this statement (11.25%). And 32.5% did not give idea.

In statement 36, "You do not have good attitudes towards listening. Therefore, you cannot get any motivation to learn listening." It could be seen that only 30% respondents agreed and strongly agreed. While 53.75% disagreed and strongly disagreed with this statement; and 16.25% gave no comment. This meant that most learners had good attitudes towards learning listening.

In statement 37, "You are not motivated by the teachers towards listening in English." The number of learners who gave approval was only 22.5%. The rest was up to 77.5%. The percentages indicated that though learners had some troubles relating to psychological factors, they got certain motivated by teachers in learning listening.

In conclusion, after carefully analyzing 6 statements about psychological factors, we could conclude that, "Anxiety makes you nervous and afraid that contributes to poor performance." was the biggest problems of learners (81.25%). It seemed anxiety was learners' difficulty in listening comprehension.

4.1.2 Results of the interview

In order to make the study more reliable, ten MBA learners 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, "Do you like learning listening? Why?" 8/10 learners gave the answers "Yes". That showed their positive attitude towards studying listening to English. In fact, they liked learning listening since they thought that good listening skill made them feel confident when communicating with others as well as developing good English and became a good listener. In addition, they liked listening skill because it was also a useful way helping them learn more about intonation, different accent, some culture, etc. from speakers who came from different countries in the world. In contrast, there were two learners reporting that they did not like listening subject because sometimes they could not hear and understand anything the speakers said. They also affirmed that they found very little passion for learning listening.

Next, in the second question, "Do you think the listening subject is the most difficult one? Why or Why not?" Comparing with other skills, listening was confirmed to be the most difficult one (10/10) because of the differences in accents, linking, final consonant sounds, etc. In question 3, "What are your problems when studying the listening subject in class?" The research figured out that almost all 10 learners had difficulties in

listening skill as connected speech, intonation, and strong form/weak form of the produced sounds or strange accents made them feel confused. When native speakers spoke fast, they could not catch up with the ideas and did not understand what being said. Another difficulty was that lack of vocabulary could make them misunderstand. In question 4, "Which problems has become your biggest difficulty in learning listening (vocabulary, pronunciation, accent etc.)? Why?" Outstanding from these mentioned difficulties, it was found that vocabulary and pronunciation became the two biggest obstacles in learning listening of all 10 learners in this interview. They said that they did not have enough vocabulary to understand the listening texts. Furthermore, it was hard for them to recognize words that had nearly the same or exactly the same sound to others. Additionally, learners themselves also suggested some solutions to improve their listening skill such as listening to English news, watching movies with English subtitles, etc.

4.2 Discussion

The results of the questionnaire indicated that many of MBA learners still met some difficulties in learning listening. Though they were aware of the importance of listening skill, they found various listening difficulties which may relate to linguistic factors, external factors and psychological factors. They were recalled one by one as follows.

Firstly, some aspects of language were the most difficult problems according to the majority of learners (the highest one - 37.5%). They were pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. To begin with pronunciation difficulties (35%), learners could not realize the sounds because sometimes the speakers' pronunciation was not good or the learners' mispronunciation also led them to difficulties in their learning. Also, it was hard for learners to understand the real meaning of the conveyed message because intonation of the speakers possessed the ability to affect the meaning of the sentences. One more difficulty belonging to this category was the differences in accents of many English speakers. To overcome these factors, it is recommended that learners should practice listening to English regularly by using some extra materials along with their course books, focusing on learning pronunciation and studying the rules of pronouncing words of people from different areas (mainly concentrating on the differences between British and American English). In addition, vocabulary (accounting for 40%) was one of barriers in listening ability. Learners did not have enough vocabulary to understand the listening text. Also they were easy to forget the words because many words had more than one meaning that they seldom used. Even, a word could have different meanings due to the specific contexts that they were put into. Therefore, it led learners to misunderstanding what they heard. In addition, they were not able to understand the listening text because they had a trend of listening word by word. Besides, grammar points were actually difficult (25%). New grammatical structures used in the conversation caused learners' confusion in the process of receiving the spoken information. Another point was that English was just a foreign language for learners, so they were affected to a greater or less degree of their first language (Vietnamese). Hence, the useful solutions for these difficulties are doing practical exercises and watching videos where grammar is explained or reading more and more books in English and reviewing regularly some new words. Moreover, learners had better raise the awareness of learning vocabulary and grammar so that they can have good methods to remember some new words or new structures that can be used in the listening text before starting listening.

Secondly, the results of the study were recognized that external factors (contributed to the second difficulty with 33.75%) that many learners had in listening. They were the format, the content and the environment. For the first one, most of learners found it was difficult when the format of the listening test was different from the one they were learning; and speakers' speech rate also made them hard to catch up with the ideas or do not understand the messages conveyed. In addition, the content caused some difficulties for listeners. They could not understand the messages being said, because the topics were strange and it had many unfamiliar words and phrases. It caused problems with their memory. To improve these, using extensive listening topics in many areas is a good way to widen learners' knowledge and taking note new things that learners think it is useful. In addition, learners should practice listening skill to collect new information in many fields more and more and that will be familiar with them soon which cultivate their minds to develop memories as well as get acquainted with all kinds of listening texts. Besides, the environment around caused problems to the listening results; especially the poor tape quality and poor equipment or the noise surrounding made learners trouble in getting messages. Also the learners' health was one of the factor affecting to the listening process. To solve these external problems, the institutes organizing the listening test should prepare all well to give the learners the best facilities while doing the test.

Finally, some psychological factors (only 28.75%) were the difficulties in listening skill. They were anxiety, lack of concentration and lack of motivation. To begin with anxiety, learners were not successful if they were always nervous or worried. Sometimes, they could not listen smoothly and forgot what they heard because of nervousness. Besides, they could not concentrate affecting their performance. While lack of motivation seemed not the problems of MBA learners. Maybe they were old enough to get motivation by themselves. In short, the

psychological factors played a negative role in listening comprehension. Learners should be calm down themselves and think about the way to solve the problems.

5. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

Now that English is a language that many people around the world use to communicate with each other, learning English becomes a great interest of many learners. In fact, to learn English effectively, it is necessary for learners to learn listening. For MBA learners at Tay Do University, they believe that listening was an indispensable subject because it helps them much in studying and daily communication as well. However, during the English learning process, they encountered many difficulties which blocked their success, especially in learning listening. After conducting this research by collecting important information given, it finally found out the most common factors in learning listening. They were linguistic, external and psychological factors. Thanks to precious information from questionnaire and interview, it could be made a conclusion that the difficulties were mostly from linguistic factors (vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar), external factors (the content, the format, and the environment) and psychological factors (lack of concentration, anxiety and lack of motivation) that affect to listening skill.

Firstly, facing difficulties in recognizing sounds or different accent could be drawn from the fact that learners were unfamiliar with English pronunciation or the difficulties of vocabulary or grammar came from not frequently using English words or not talking note the new words, new structures or learners did not focus on the listening assignments, they would fail in getting the important information from the text and not deal with it well, etc. Thus, they have to make lots of effort to overcome their problems. Besides these difficulties, there were many external factors and psychological factors adversely affecting learners' listening ability. Learners must get over from the difficulties by creating advancement opportunities themselves.

5.2 Implication

The analyzed results of the questionnaire and interview showed that most of the participants of the study realized the vital role of English in studying listening skill. It is almost always true that if one wants to be successful in a specific field, they need to be aware of their difficulties then they can overcome them. The research hopes that learners recognize their weak points so that they can find out personal resolution and suitable studying methods to improve their listening skill.

In addition, this study is also useful for the teachers who want to know the difficulties that their learners often meet. Teachers play an important role in teaching learners' strategies and how to apply them into listening tasks. From these mentioned problems, they can propose appropriate resolutions for improvement. Then they can offer learners suitable materials for learning and teaching methods that helps learners listen more effectively.

5.3 Recommendation

This research has finished in finding the common factors in listening which MBA learners have to experience in listening comprehension. And it can be seen as a basic for further research in the future. Based on the results of this survey study, learners also realize their difficulties and have some suggestions to help them with better listening.

Firstly, learners should spend much time on practicing. They should listen to a variety of topics to get familiar with them. Hence, the linguistic knowledge will be enriched as well as the skills. In addition, learners should know how to apply suitable strategies to each kind of listening text in order to get the best results.

However, the skill of learners will not be improved the best without teachers. Teachers play such a significant in building up learners' skills. By each lesson, teachers show their learners the ways in each stage of listening comprehension. Generally, there are three stages: pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening. Furthermore, teachers advise learners with the syllabus they can self-study at home. In short, this research does not focus on how teachers carry out their lesson, but it is a chance to understand more about learners' difficulties in listening.

Hopefully, there will be some researches about solutions for learners to overcome these obstacles. Besides, further researchers will study about difficulties in speaking, then combine with the study for learners because it helps them more to become master in communication.

6. REFERENCES

1. Ardila, M. A. C. (2013). Exploring factors affecting listening skills and their implications for the development of the communicative competence. *Open Writing Doors Journal*. Pamplona, Colombia. 10 (2), 54-92.
2. Barthes, R. (1985). *The responsibility of forms*. University of California Press.
3. Boyle, J. P. (1984). Factors affecting listening comprehension. *ELT Journal*. 38(1), 34-38.
4. Brand, L. M. (2010). The effect of technology on attention and concentration within the classroom context. University of South Africa.
5. Chastain, K. (1988). *Developing second language skill*. Virginia: University of Virginia.
6. Cross, D. (1998). *Teach English*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
7. Flowerdew, J. and Miller, L. (1996). Student perceptions, problems and strategies. In *second language lecture comprehension*. *RELC Journal*. 23 (2), 60-80.
8. Gilakjani, A. P. (2012). The significance of pronunciation in English language teaching. *English Teaching Journal*. 5 (4), 96-107.
9. Lightbown, P., & Spada, N. (1993). *How languages are learned*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University.
10. Mendelsohn, D. J. (1994). *Learning to listen: A strategy-based approach for second language learner*. San Diego: Dominie Press
11. Nunan, D (1998). Approaches to teaching listening in language classroom. *Proceedings of the 1998 Korea TESOL Conference*. Kyunghee University, Seoul South Korea.
12. Nunan, D. (1999). *Second language teaching and learning*. Boston: Heinle and Heinle Publishers.
13. Rost, M. (1994). *Introducing listening*. London: Penguin.
14. Thornbury, S. (2002). *How to teach vocabulary*. Pearson Education Limited.
15. Underwood, M. (1989). *Teaching listening*. New York: Longman.
16. Vandergrift, L. (1997). The comprehension strategies of second language (French) listeners. *ACTFL*. 30 (3), 387-409.
17. William, J.D. (2005). *The teacher's grammar book*. Routledge
18. Yagang, F. (1994) *Listening: Problems and solutions*. *Teacher development: Making the right moves*. US Information Agency: Washington DC, 189-196.
19. Yildiz, N. & Albay, M. (2015). Factors affecting listening comprehension and strategies for improvement. *International Journal of Social Sciences & Educational Studies*. 2 (1). 20-24.
20. Young, D. (1990). An investigation of students' perspective on anxiety and speaking. *Foreign Language Annals* 23 (6), 539-553.