

LISTENING DIFFICULTIES OF ENGLISH-MAJORED SOPHOMORES AT TAY DO UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Listening is considered the most important part of second language learning, especially English. However, many students, especially English-majored sophomores, face a lot of difficulties in studying listening. Because of this, the study entitled “Listening difficulties of English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University” was conducted. It aims to figure out the challenges difficulties that sophomores majoring in English at Tay Do University may encounter when studying listening. Eighty English-majored sophomores of English classes, course 16 at Tay Do University, were chosen as the participants of this research. Questionnaire and interview papers were delivered to collect and analyze the data. This was a combination of quantitative and qualitative research. The results from analysis of the questionnaires and paper interview showed that students faced various kinds of difficulties in studying listening such as linguistic factors (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and background knowledge) and listening comprehension (listening environment, different accents, speakers' speed and psychological factors). The findings of this study are hoped to be a reference for teachers and students in teaching and studying listening, and for further studies in similar field.

Keyword: listening, difficulties, sophomores, university

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the rationale, research aims, research question, the significance and the organization of the study.

1.1. Rationale

English is the most spoken language in the world. English is the official first language and the second one in many countries. It is ranked as one of the most influential languages in the world. With this internationalization, English has become a language that is spoken all over the world and is utilized in a variety of sectors, including finance, politics, culture, and the economy. Kumar (2009) stated that English is the most crucial language in the world because it is the only language that truly links the whole world together.

Because of the importance of English in modern society, the Vietnamese government has made a number of measures to improve the level of English proficiency amongst citizens. For instance, every level of national education now promotes learning and teaching English. As a result, from primary schools through higher institutions in Vietnam, students are required to learn English as a foreign language (EFL).

Students must therefore become fluent in all four skills of English – Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing in order to successfully adapt to the language requirements and get high test results. Of the four English skills, Listening is considered the most essential skill that contributes to the success of language learners. According to Rost (2009: 124), listening helps us understand the world around us and is one of the elements necessary to create successful communication. Having good listening skills can help students get through difficult conversations, better understand other people, and form stronger bonds with them.

However, Listening is also considered the hardest skill to master. Learners will find it difficult to communicate in English if their listening skills are not good enough to interpret what other people have said.

According to Yagang (1994), the problems in listening were accompanied with the four following factors: the message, the speaker, the listener and the physical setting. As for foreign language learning, listening is of paramount important since it provides the language input (Rost, 1994).

Many Vietnamese students, especially English-majored sophomores, often run into difficulties when studying listening because of fearing in communication and lacking confidence. Some students say that it is not easy for them because of the fast speed in the listening text. Others say a noisy environment also gives them a challenge when studying listening.

For the aforementioned reasons, the researcher decided to conduct a study named “Listening difficulties of English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University”.

1.2. Research aims

This study is carried out to investigate the difficulties in listening of English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University so that they could identify their difficulties and improve their listening skills.

1.3. The significance of the study

This study aims to find out the difficulties that English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University run into when studying listening. From this, students will be able to recognize their own difficulties to overcome them and improve their listening scores. The study is also hoped to be a beneficial reference for teachers to get more insights into students’ problems and making suitable adjustments in teaching them.

1.4. The organization of the study

This study includes five chapters consisting of (1) Introduction, (2) Literature review, (3) Research methodology, (4) Research result and discussions, and (5) Conclusion, Implications, Limitations, and Recommendations for further research.

Chapter one – Introduction shows the rationale, research aim, the significance and the organization of this study.

Chapter two – Literature review includes the definition of listening, the importance of listening, common difficulties in studying listening, some factors affect English listening skills and some previous researches related to this study.

Chapter three – Research methodology consists of research methodology, research questions, hypothesis, participants, instruments, and procedure of the research.

Chapter four – Results and discussion include the findings of the study and detailed description on students’ difficulties in studying listening.

Chapter five – Conclusions, implications, limitations, and recommendations offer the conclusions, implications, limitations of the study, as well as recommendations for further studies.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter includes the definition of listening, the importance of listening, factors causing difficulties in studying listening and some previous researches related to this study.

2.1. Definition of listening

It is said that listening is the most important skill in language learning because it is the most widely used language skill in normal daily life (Rost, 2002). It indicates a person’s ability to receive and interpret information in the communication process.

In daily life, listening is an everyday activity that has an important role in receiving information (Nushi & Orouji, 2020). Rost (2013) stated that listening refers to a complex process that allows people to comprehend spoken language. Not only is it an essential element of producing effective communication, it also helps people to understand the world.

Unlike hearing, which may be a passive process, listening requires concentration and effort. Listening is not just hearing what the other party in the conversation has to say. As stated by poet Alice Duer Miller, listening means taking a vigorous, human interest in what is being told us. You can listen like a blank wall or like a splendid auditorium where every sound comes back fuller and richer, as stated by Nordquist in 2019.

Listening is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying – according to Howatt & Dakin (1974). It is a process of understanding a speaker's accent or pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary used by the speaker and grasping the intended meaning of the speaker. It is an important communicative process and is crucial for effective communication.

Willis (1981:134) lists a series of micro-skills of listening, which she calls “enabling skills”. They include predicting what people are going to talk about, guessing at unknown words or phrases without panicking, using one's own knowledge of the subject to help one understand, identifying relevant points; rejecting irrelevant information, retaining relevant points (note-taking, summarizing), recognizing discourse markers, e.g., well, oh, another thing is..., now, finally etc. , recognizing cohesive devices, e.g. such as ‘and’, ‘which’, other linking words, pronouns, references etc. , understanding different intonation patterns and uses of stress, which give clue to meaning and social setting, and understanding inferred information, e.g., speaker's attitudes or intentions.

After all discussions above, listening is defined in different ways by each academic and each field of study. However, it is also defined simply as the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. Its main goal is making people have a full and accurate understanding of the content that other people present and feel more comfortable. On the whole, listening is an indispensable skill for everyone, especially for English-major students.

2.2. The importance of listening

Research suggests that listening should be the primary skill in learning a new language. There is evidence that promoting listening comprehension results in increased acquisition of the other language skills and consequently leads to acquisition of the target language. It is only logical that one cannot give an output (speak) correctly unless one comprehends the input (listening comprehension), according to Cheung in 2010.

Listening is the most frequently used language skill of the four language skills, (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992). Listening is the primary means by which incoming ideas and information are taken in (Devine, 1982). Adults spend in communication activities 45% listening, 30% speaking, 16% reading, and only 9% (Rivers & Temperly, 1978). Gilbert (1988) noted that students from kindergarten through high school spend 65-90% of their communication time for listening. Wolvin and Coakley (1988) said that, in and out of the classroom, listening consumes more of daily communication time than other forms of verbal communication.

Listening plays a critical role in the cognitive processes that shape output and produce improvement in oral proficiency. According to Rubin (1995), for second language/foreign language learners, listening is the skill that makes the heaviest processing demands because learners must store information in short term memory at the same time as they are working to understand the information (p. 8). Furthermore, she explained that whereas in reading learners can go over the text at leisure, they generally don't have the opportunity to do so in listening.

Listening has an important role not only in daily life but also in classroom settings. Anderson and Lynch (2003) state that we only become aware of what remarkable feats of listening we achieve when we are in an unfamiliar listening environment, such as listening to a language in which we have limited proficiency (p. 3). Most people think that being able to write and speak in a second language means that they know the language; however, if they do not have the efficient listening skills, it is not possible to communicate effectively. That is, listening is the basic skill in language learning and over 50% of the time that students spend functioning in a foreign language will be devoted to listening (Nunan, 1998). Rost (1991) summarized the importance of listening in second language learning as follows:

Firstly, listening is vital in the language classroom because it provides input for the learner. Without understanding input at the right level, any learning simply cannot begin.

Secondly, authentic spoken language presents a challenge for the learner to understand language as native speakers actually use it.

Thirdly, listening exercises provide teachers with a means for drawing learners' attention to new forms (vocabulary, grammar, new interaction patterns) in the language (pp. 141-142).

Thus, listening is essential not only as a receptive skill but also is pivotal in the development of spoken language proficiency.

To summarize, listening has an important role both in daily life and in academic contexts as it is crucial for people to sustain effective communication. Emphasizing the importance of listening, Anderson and Lynch (2003) state that listening skills are as important as speaking skills because people cannot communicate face-to-face unless both types of skills are developed together.

2.3 .Factors causing difficulties in studying listening

The difficulties in listening vary according to different aspects such as linguistic factors and listening comprehension. There are a number of factors that facilitate or impede successful listening communication.

Linguistic factors commonly refer to the elements of English as a language itself, which include vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and background knowledge. Listening comprehension problems include listening environment, different accents, speakers' speed and psychological factors. These are all factors influencing students' listening skills.

2.3.1. Linguistic factors

The linguistic factors have a great influence on students' communication skills as well as their future jobs. This is also one kind of obstacle that students always meet during their learning or communication process. Nevertheless, they sometimes do not realize how important it is and pay no attention to it. Therefore, in this part, the researcher will clarify some problems related to linguistics such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and background knowledge so that students can recognize the linguistic obstacles that they are facing.

2.3.1.1. Vocabulary

Vocabulary is considered a crucial element that students should learn first because vocabulary is the core material for learning the English language in general and listening skills in particular.

According to Underwood (1989), listeners have a limited vocabulary. The speaker may choose words the listener does not know. Listeners sometimes encounter an unknown word, which may cause them to stop and think about the meaning of that word and thus cause them to miss the next part of the speech. Students may have established certain learning habits, such as a wish to understand every word. By tradition, teachers want students to understand every word they hear by repeating and pronouncing words carefully, by grading the language to suit their level, by speaking slowly and so on. Consequently, students tend to become worried if they fail to understand a particular word or phrase and they will be discouraged by the failure. It is thus sometimes necessary for students to tolerate vagueness and incompleteness of understanding.

Chastain (1988) said that the lack of needed vocabulary is the most common cause of students' inability to say what they want to say during communication activities. Vocabulary inefficiency can be a major problem for students; they do not easily express their thoughts and listen to understand what others are saying exactly.

Vocabulary is a big trouble for students, even English-majored students ones, because it takes them a very long time to learn and memorize. Besides, it is believed that students have to know thousands of words for their studying. Thornbury (2002) mentions that students need approximately between 1,000 to 2,000 high-frequency words for basic conversation and everyday texts, they also need more or less 8,000 words for advanced conversation and in the region of 10,000 to 20,000-word families (excluding fixed phrases and expressions) to read at a university level.

Therefore, when listening to a new or unfamiliar word, students usually tend to stop for a while to figure what that word is so they miss the listening text that is still playing, thus causing difficulties for students when studying listening. If students do not know the meaning of many of the words that they will encounter in a text, their comprehension of that selection is likely to be compromised (John & Shane, 2004). In short, lacking of vocabulary is one of the main reasons causing the difficulties in listening.

2.3.1.2. Grammar

Grammar is an extremely important element for students when studying English. English grammar includes the structure of words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and whole texts.

According to Thornbury (1999), grammar is partly the study of what forms (or structure) are possible in a language. Traditionally, grammar has been concerned almost exclusively with analysis of the level of the sentences. Thus, grammar is the description of the rules that govern how a language's sentences are formed. Grammar is a term used to mean many different things. When teachers and administrators grow frustrated over error in students' writing, they often call for a return to "the basic" which they define as grammar (Williams, 2012)

The importance of grammar knowledge for listening has been less explored, although there is a range of research arguing that there may be a strong relation between grammar and reading (Grabe, 2004). In cognitive psychology, Anderson (2009) asserts that knowledge of the structure of English allows us to grasp the meaning of a sentence in the comprehension process. However, Mecarty (2000) states that grammatical knowledge does not contribute significantly to either listening or reading comprehension but vocabulary knowledge plays the important role in L2 listening comprehension ability. VanPatten (1996) revealed that learners, in particular early stage learners, have difficulty in attending to both form and content in listening. As Field (2008) concluded that function words were not paid attention to when people listen, it seems reasonable to argue that since function words were more relevant to grammar knowledge while content words were more relevant to lexical meaning. It might be impossible

to divide into lexical knowledge and grammar knowledge since listeners might combine both syntactic and semantic cues in interpreting the sentence.

It seems to be that students do not pay a lot of attention to grammar because they think it is unimportant when studying listening. They are unable to listen because of their confusion and misinterpretation of what other people are saying as a result of this misperception. Another mistake for Vietnamese students is that they usually apply their native language structures to structures of English, which can lead to misunderstand and even causing serious problems with other people. Without mastering grammar properly, students can easily get failure in listening.

2.3.3.3. Pronunciation

Pronunciation is a significant factor for studying English, especially in listening.

Richards and Schmidt (2002) define pronunciation as the way certain sounds are produced. Pronunciation emphasizes the way sounds are understood by the listeners. They continued that pronunciation is a significant part of English because mispronunciations make it difficult for listeners to understand the meaning of sentences correctly. Harmer (2007) defines pronunciation as the way the sounds of a language are made, the way how and where the word stress and sentence stress are placed, and the way how pitch and intonation are used to indicate our feeling and our meaning.

Pronunciation is defined as the method of producing the sounds for constructing meaning. It consists of consonants and vowels of a language (segments), features of speech such as stress, timing, rhythm, intonation, phrasing (suprasegmental features), and voice quality. All of the mentioned elements can work together when speakers speak so that difficulties in one element may affect another and this may make an individual's pronunciation easy or difficult to understand (Gilakjani, 2012; Yates, L., & Zielinski, B., 2009).

Harmer (2001) expressed that the first thing that native speakers notice during a conversation is pronunciation. Grammar and vocabulary are important elements of language and they can be useless if the speakers cannot pronounce those elements or words accurately. Native speakers can understand people, despite their grammatical errors, if they use accurate pronunciation. Communicative efficiency can be guaranteed by correct pronunciation. Pronunciation is an essential part of communication and without correct pronunciation nobody can say that he/she knows the English language perfectly.

While many EFL learners know the significance of English pronunciation, a lot of EFL learners unfortunately mispronounce sounds, misplace stress in sentences and misuse intonation patterns. Learners whose first language belongs to the syllable-timed languages such as Czech, Italian, Hungarian, where the stress is on all syllables have a lot of problems in adopting the English stress-time patterns. This is an important reason why many adults are struggling with English pronunciation sounds and cannot eliminate the habits of their native pronunciation (Tennant, 2007). This problem can be overcome by exposing EFL learners to as many pronunciation tasks as possible to make them understand the native speakers' pronunciation (Hewings, 1993).

According to Yagang (1994), the listeners have a tendency to get familiar with the accents which they mostly listen to. If listeners are exposed to standard British or American accents, they will face problems in understanding other accents. Indeed, English-major students often focus on listening to American and British accents and they are used to listening to these accents, so when listening to other accents, they get strident and listen ineffectively. As a result, the accent is one of the factors that results in failure in listening.

In brief, pronunciation is an important, yet difficult, element that students shouldn't underrate it when studying listening.

2.3.3.4. Background knowledge

Background knowledge also contributes to the success of EFL learners, but it seems that not everyone realizes the importance of it.

According to Lent (2012), background knowledge is the glue that makes learning stick (Lent, 2012). Everyone has background knowledge and brings bits and pieces of it to their reading experience. However, how often does a teacher activate background knowledge or provide activities to build it before starting to read a new text. Some researchers consider the role of schematic knowledge as one of the factors affecting comprehension. Brown and Yule (1983), for example, describe schemata as "organized background knowledge which leads us to expect or predict aspects in our interpretation of discourse" (p. 248). The listener's stereotypical knowledge based on prior experiences predisposes him or her to construct expectations in terms of seven areas: speaker, listener, place, time, genre, topic, and co-text. Brown and Yule (1993) contend that the listener uses two basic principles to relate the new information to his or her previous experience: the principle of analogy, i.e. things will be as they were before and the principle of minimal change, i.e., things are as like as possible to how they were before.

As Underwood in 1989 said, listeners may lack contextual knowledge. Sharing mutual knowledge and common context makes communication easier. Even if listeners can understand the surface meaning of the text, they may have considerable difficulties in comprehending the whole meaning of the passage unless they are familiar with the context. Nonverbal cues, such as facial expression, nods, gestures, or tone of voice, can also be easily misinterpreted by listeners from different cultures.

One of the main problems that English language learners encounter in listening is that there are unfamiliar sounds that appear in English but not in their native language, and this leads to comprehension difficulties. For instance, even though Vietnamese and English have similar consonants, Vietnamese does not have some of the consonants of English, which can lead Vietnamese students to make mistakes when they speak or listen to an English conversation. Avery and Ehrlich (1992) said that Vietnamese students tend to omit one or more consonants from a difficult cluster (p. 155). The most common mistake is the deletion of consonant *s* in the middle of words, for example, they say /əb' trækt/ for abstract /əb'strækt/ (Honey, 1987).

Besides, being unfamiliar of cultural knowledge of language plays a great role understanding the context. The marriage between language and culture is indivisible (Brown, 1994). The topic may contain completely different cultural matter than the students have. In this case students may have difficulties to imagine what has been told. Here the instructors should give prior knowledge about the topic beforehand. For instance, if the listening part is about Easter Day and it is not common in the area that language is being taught students cannot catch some points.

In addition to this, learners should be familiar with the cultural knowledge of language that has a significant effect on the learners' understanding. If the listening task involves completely different cultural materials then the learners may have critical problems in their comprehension. It is the responsibility of teachers to give background knowledge about the listening activities in advance (Azmi, Celik, Yidliz, & Tugrul, 2014).

For the aforementioned reasons, English-majored students should have background knowledge to improve their English, especially listening skill.

2.3.2 Listening comprehension problems

It has been apparent in recent years that listening comprehension has become a very important skill for both studying and daily life. However, students often get troubles with listening comprehension because it is not simple as they think.

In this part, four main problems of listening comprehension will be analyzed including listening environment, different accents, speakers' speed and psychological factors.

2.3.2.1. Listening environment

Listening environment seems to be a neglected factor by students when studying listening. However, it has many impacts for students both in studying and scores.

Not only the difficulties come from the message, the listener or the speaker but also come from the environment surrounding the students. According to Bloomfield et al (2011), noise or distortion in the audio signal interferes with listening comprehension for listeners.

Sometimes inconvenience of classrooms affects students listening comprehension. In the large classrooms students who are sitting on the back rows may not hear the recording as students sit in front. Students who prefer to stay next to the windows also affected by the noise that come from outside. As a teacher we have to take into account all this conditions in a body. The size of the classroom also makes difficult for teacher to manage the all class in group activity or to get feedback from students. The temperature of class can be counted as a factor that makes listening comprehension difficult.

Noise is another environmental barrier to comprehension. Interior as well as exterior class noise is an obstacle to comprehension. Noise, including both background noises on the recording and environmental noises, can take the listener's mind off the content of the listening passage. With the noise coming from corridors and other classes some students experience difficulty in listening to the teachers' voices. Because of the noise in classroom and the poorly preparation of lab, students cannot be concentrated on listening to the recording material. If the listening task is carried out with noises around, it is for sure they will not have a good result in listening. First, they are distracted by the noise no matter how hard they try to focus on the task. Otherwise, the noise makes a complex of sounds instead of the solo recording being played. This interrupts the students from hearing and focusing on the task (Hamouda, 2013).

A bad listening environment will make it difficult for both speakers and listeners to communicate. If their conversation takes place in a noisy environment, the listener can easily be distracted.

In brief, listening environment is a factor that almost impossible to avoid for students when studying listening.

2.3.2.2. Different accents

Accent is another factor that English-major students usually encounter in listening comprehension.

Bloomfield et al. (2010) told that regional accents can impact the spoken message that is understood by the listeners and familiar accents are easier to understand than unfamiliar accents. Buck (2001) mentioned a lot of problems in listening activities like unknown vocabularies, unfamiliar topics, fast speech rate, and unfamiliar accents.

Munro and Derwing (1999) expressed that too many accented speech can lead to an important reduction in comprehension. According to Goh (1999), 66% of learners mentioned a speaker's accent as one of the most significant factors that affect listener comprehension. Unfamiliar accents both native and non-native can cause serious problems in listening comprehension and familiarity with an accent helps learners' listening comprehension. Buck (2001) indicated that when listeners hear an unfamiliar accent such as Indian English for the first time after studying only American English will encounter critical difficulties in listening. This will certainly interrupt the whole listening comprehension process and at the same time an unfamiliar accent makes comprehension impossible for the listeners.

There is a variety of English accents such as American English, British English and Australian English. However, instead of using the native English accents, the Vietnamese students seem to be familiar with Vietnamese English, which can make them uncomfortable when communicating with the native speakers, leading to their difficulties in listening.

2.3.2.3. Speakers' speed

Speakers' speed has been identified as one of the major factors affecting listening comprehension between native speakers and non-native speakers.

It is clear for most language learners and teachers that a slower speech speed would facilitate beginner learners' listening comprehension (Flaherty, 1979; Griffiths, 1990; King & Behnke, 1989; Zhao, 1997). Blau (1990) concluded that lessen the input speed is one of the effective technics that helps comprehension for second language learners.

In addition, listeners cannot control the speed of delivery. Many English language learners believe that the greatest difficulty with listening comprehension, as opposed to reading comprehension, is that the listener cannot control how quickly a speaker speaks (Underwood, 1989, p. 16). If the speakers speak faster than normal listener may have difficulties to catch target words. Underwood states that on the contrary of reading comprehension the listener cannot control speed of the speaker and this cause the greatest difficulty with listening comprehension.

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In addition, the level of students play a great role when listening long parts and keeping all the information in the mind. It is not easy for the lower level student to listen more than three minutes long listening then completing the desired activities. Short listening texts facilitate listening comprehension and diminish boredom, keep learners concentration alive (Atkins, 1995). If the text contains a lot of information, it is not easy to store everything in mind, exceptional listening ability and strategy required to understand (Carroll, 1977).

Thus, we can assume that the speech's speed can affect the listening comprehension for both the speaker and listener.

2.3.2.4. Psychological factors

Psychological factors also affects students' listening comprehension results, even if they have good grammar or vocabulary.

Krashen (1985) states that the language learning process can be influenced by affective factors such as anxiety, motivation, attitude and self-confidence. He defines the affective factors as filters which can monitor the process of language acquisition through permitting the language input to pass into the language learning systems in the mind. He also explains that anxiety works as blocks that prevent the information to reach into the specific areas in the brain.

Students' motivation is one of the crucial factors that affect listening comprehension. It can be difficult for students maintaining the concentration in a foreign language learning classroom. In listening comprehension, even the smallest pause in attention may considerably spoil comprehension. When students find the topic of the listening text interesting, comprehending would be easier. For all that, students find listening very boring even if they are interested in the topic because it needs a huge amount of effort in order to not miss the meaning (Azmi Bingol, Celik, Yidliz, and Tugrul Mart, 2014).

According to Yagang (1994), the listening comprehension process is also a relatively complex psychological process. In psychology, it is stated that when a person feels nervous or anxious he or she may not be concentrated. When one felt uncomfortable, his or her ability to listen is greatly reduced. Boredom and frustration are other barriers to listening comprehension. Boredom and frustration may affect the extent to which attention is paid to listening. This occurs as a result of poor stimulation caused by disinterest in the topic, lack of motivation, failure in the part of the teacher to present meaningful material in a stimulating manner, or presenting the lecture in a monotone instigating sleep

It can be difficult for listeners to concentrate in a foreign language. In listening comprehension, even the shortest break in attention can seriously impair comprehension. Concentration is easier when students find the topic of the listening passage interesting; however, students sometimes feel listening is very tiring even if they are interested because it requires an enormous amount of effort to follow the meaning (Underwood, 1989).

In addition to this, listeners may fail to recognize the signals, which indicate that the speaker is moving from one point to another, giving an example, or repeating a point. Discourse markers used in formal situations or lectures such as “secondly,” or “then” are comparatively evident to listeners. In informal situations or spontaneous conversations, signals are more vague as in pauses, gestures, increased loudness, a clear change of pitch, or different intonation patterns. These signals can easily be missed especially by less proficient listeners (Underwood, 1989).

Besides, lacking of confidence also a big trouble. Students think that their listening is bad and feel that they can not listen well, they rather keep silent in comprehension. Nunan (1999) said that students who lack confidence in themselves and their English necessarily suffer from communication apprehension. The other cause of students’ lack of confidence also deals with the lack of encouragement from the teacher (Brown, 2007, p. 168).

In summary, psychological factors can bring troubles for students, especially English-majored students.

2.4 Related studies

Previously, many researchers had conducted some studies in English-listening problems as well as difficulties faced by English-majored students. The participants may be from different levels, and the topics are not exactly the same.

A study named “Difficulties in Listening of English-Majored Sophomores at Tay Do University in Vietnam” conducted by Luu and Nguyen with the purpose of finding out the difficulties that English majored sophomores faced in listening comprehension so that students can recognize their own obstacles in learning listening and find out appropriate ways to listen in English effectively in 2022. The participants are 75 English majored sophomores 14 classes, course (2019 – 2023) at Tay Do University. The study showed that vocabulary, pronunciation, background knowledge and psychological factors were the major listening comprehension difficulties.

Similarly, in 2021, Vo and Nguyen conducted a study named “Vietnamese English-majored students’ use of listening strategies” with the participate of 81 university English-majored students. The study showed that listening strategies were used at a relatively high level with the metacognitive group employed most frequently compared to cognitive and socio-affective strategies. Lowering anxiety, predicting and planning, resourcing, repetition, and cooperation were found most commonly employed individual strategies.

Another study was conducted by Nguyen in 2020 “A study on some difficulties encountered by second-year English majored students in learning English listening skill online at Hai Phong Management and Technology University”. This study was conducted to find out some difficulties encountered by second-year English majored students in learning English listening skill online at Hai Phong Management and Technology University and give solutions to help students overcome their problems. Twenty two second-year English major students enrolled in Foreign languages department participated in this study. The study found out that HPU second-year English major students encounter a lot of difficulties in learning English listening skill online. The problems are different in eight different categories including vocabulary, pronunciation, connected speech, accents, speed rate, spoken structures, repetition or hesitation and noise.

Next, the study “An investigation into English-majored students’ difficulties in doing their listening comprehension tasks” conducted by Mai in 2022. The aim of this study is investigating difficulties faced by the English-majored students in doing listening comprehension tasks with 38 English-majored students joined. The conclusion of the study is the listener finds it hard to grasp the meaning when the speaker/s in the recording is speaking too fast. Longspoken texts were also uncovered to be the factor negatively influencing the quality of listening. With regard to the listener, the study found that students had some listening obstacles like listening to colloquial language, slangs, unknown words and reduced forms. Finally, the study also found that students who had difficulties can come to the conclusion that findings indicated that the students faced difficulties in doing listening comprehension tasks, which were related to the three categories namely the listening materials, the role of the listener and the physical setting

Also, in 2021, Tran, Nguyen, Phan and Huynh conducted a study named “Difficulties in studying TOEIC listening comprehension of non-English majored freshmen at Tay Do University, Vietnam”. 15 students who were randomly selected in the non-English majored class, course XII at Tay Do University participated in this study. The purpose of this study is to explore the difficulties of studying TOEIC Listening Comprehension. The findings were classified into four basic items consisting of the students’ background, students’ attitude, students’ evaluation on listening and students’ difficulties in studying TOEIC listening comprehension.

In short, it is not easy for students to study listening well because of different factors come from subjectivity as well as objectivity. Although it is important, many sophomores consider listening the most difficult skill to learn in English. Therefore, the researcher decided to conduct a study named “Listening difficulties of English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University”.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter includes the research design, research question, hypothesis, participants, instruments, and procedure of the research.

3.1. Research design

This study is carried out to answer the research question and to test the hypothesis. English-majored sophomores are chosen as participants of this study. They will answer questionnaires and interview papers so as to investigate their problems in studying listening. The study is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods.

3.2. Research question

This study was designed to address the following question:

What difficulties in listening do English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University have?

3.3. Hypothesis

For many English-majored students, listening is the hardest skill to learn and master. Based on the related references and the research question, the researcher hypothesized the English-majored sophomores would have some difficulties in studying listening which come from the elements related to linguistic factors and listening comprehension problems. Remarkably, depending on these problems, students can recognize their shortcomings and overcome their weaknesses. From this, students will have more motivation in listening, so that they can improve their listening skills and get better scores for listening. Also, this study can be used as a reference for teachers to get more insights into students’ problems and making suitable adjustments in teaching them.

3.4. Participants

The participants are 80 English-majored sophomores, course 16, at Tay Do University. They come from different areas, both rural and urban. Their ages range from 19 to 22 years old. They speak Vietnamese as their mother tongue, and English is considered as a foreign language. Most of them have been learning English for at least 10 years. However, they seem to have run into different difficulties in studying English listening. The students are given questionnaire, ten of them are interviewed, in order to get information about difficulties they have faced in learning English listening skills.

3.5. Instruments

The instruments of this study are questionnaire and interview papers. They are used to collect the participants’ ideas. By using these research instruments, students’ problems in studying listening might be revealed in details.

3.5.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of two main parts. The first part is about student’s personal information. The second one is designed to get learners’ difficulties in linguistics factors and listening comprehension problems. It is designed on the basis of the five-degree scales including strongly agree (SA), agree (A), no idea (NI), disagree (D), strongly disagree (SD). The questionnaire consists of 4 questions and 24 statements which are classified into the following sections:

Questions/Statements	Summary of the content of the question
a. Question 1 to 4	- Students' personal background
b. Statement 1 to 3	- Difficulties about vocabulary
c. Statement 4 to 6	- Difficulties about grammar
d. Statement 7 to 9	- Difficulties about pronunciation
e. Statement 10 to 12	- Difficulties about background knowledge
f. Statement 13 to 15	- Problems related to listening environment
g. Statement 16 to 18	- Problems related to different accents
h. Statement 19 to 21	- Problems related to speakers' speed
i. Statement 22 to 24	- Problems related to psychological factors

3.5.2. Interview

In order to make the study more specific and objective, the interview paper, which includes 3 questions mentioning difficulties in studying listening, will be delivered to 10 sophomores who are randomly selected in 80 sophomores at Tay Do University.

3.6. Data analysis

Immediately after data collection, information is processed using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

More specifically, data from the questionnaire will be analyzed by using Microsoft Excel. Data from the interview papers will be mainly explained by using the qualitative analysis method. All the collected data will be compiled and calculated.

3.7. Procedure

This research is conducted in approximately 12 weeks and the process is divided into 4 steps, as seen in the following table:

Duration	Activities in study process
Step 1: from the 1 st week to 4 th week.	- Choosing the research topic and creating the outline. - Seeking materials to support the research. - Writing chapter 1, 2, and 3.
Step 2: from the 5 th week to 6 th week.	- Designing the questionnaire and the interview.
Step 3: from the 7 th week to 8 th week.	- Delivering the questionnaire and the interview.
Step 4: from the 9 th week to 12 th week.	- Analyzing the data gathered. - Writing chapter 4 and chapter 5. - Completing the study.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the data obtained from the questionnaire and interview. Furthermore, the findings of this study will be thoroughly discussed.

4.1. Results

This part illustrated the ultimate results of the study. They were depicted for analyzing the data amassed from all participants noted in the previous chapter. The results comprised two sections, namely the results from the questionnaire and the results from the interview.

4.1.1 Results from the questionnaire

Thanks to the questionnaire, the researcher was able to gather a huge amount of information from the participants that would be divided into two parts, students' personal information and difficulties in listening.

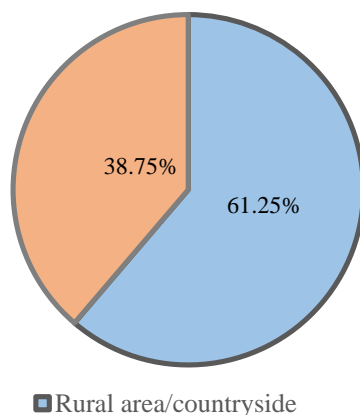
4.1.1.1 Students’ personal information and difficulties in listening

4.1.1.1.1 Students’ personal information

a. Students’ living environment

The pie chart below shows the proportion of the living environment of the English sophomores course 16.

Figure 4.1. Proportion of students’ living environment



As can be seen from the chart, 61.25% (49/80) of English sophomores at Tay Do University come from the countryside and merely 38.75% (31/80) of them are from the city. As a consequence, there is indubitable that they had different backgrounds. It is also implied that students have possessed varying levels of their English listening skills. Therefore, when they had no chance to study in an academic setting, they have been prone to confront a vast number of challenges in adjusting. That is the explanation for their limited listening skills.

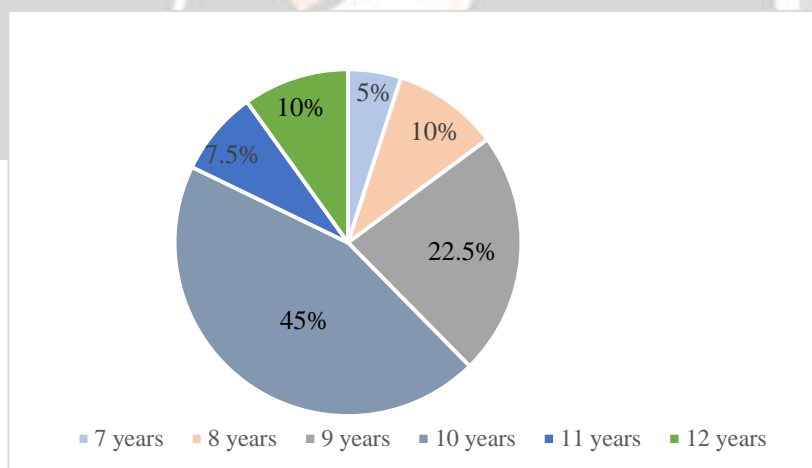


Figure 4.2. Proportion of students’ English learning years

Taking a look at the above pie chart, the largest piece represented 45% (36/80) of the participants who have learned English for 10 years. It meant they have studied this language since grade 4th and have spent 10 years learning the language before enrolling in university; however, this did not mean they have no difficulty in listening. This is because they learned not only English but also a variety of other subjects as part of the school curriculum during those years. Another significant one came from those studying English for 9 years, accounting for 22.5% (18/80). The percentage of students who have studied English for 12 years was 10% (8/80), the same with the percentage of those who have studied 8 years, with 10% (8/80). Further, the percentage of sophomore studying this language for an 11-year period was minor, only 7.5% (6/80). Lastly, 5% was the tiniest slice of the pie chart since just 4/80 participants have studied English for 7 years. In general, the percentage of students studying English for 10 years was the most dominant, while the quantity of sophomore learning English for the period of 7 years was super

little. Over the years of learning the global language, they were likely to assess the amount of their English knowledge which they gained unequally.

b. Students’ attitude toward English listening skill

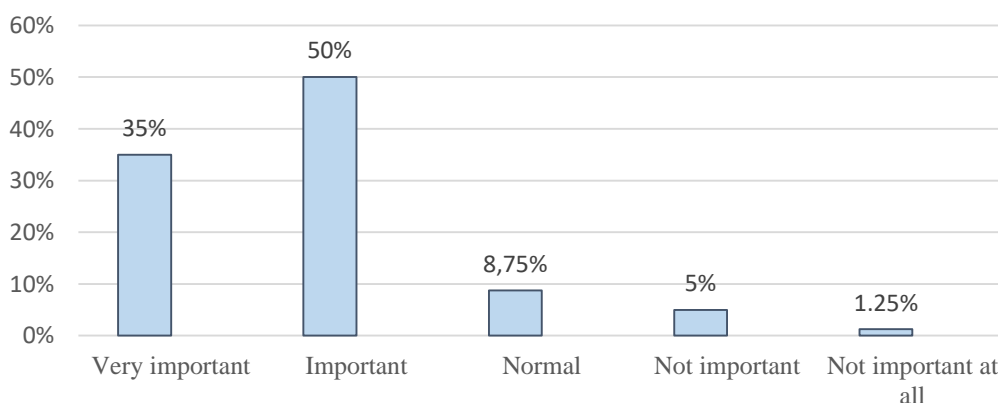


Figure 4.3. Students' perspective toward listening skill

The issue of knowing listening skill could not reach a consensus among students who were asked. According to Figure 4.3, it is obvious that the percentage of students who claimed that English listening was “important” was the highest rate, at 50% (40/80), while 35% believed that listening is a very important skill (28/80). The percentage of participants who stated “normal” as their attitude toward English listening was significantly lower than either of the two previously listed, accounting for just 8,75% (7/80). It was surprising that 5% of them (4/80) believed that English listening was not important. Finally, only one student, at 1,25%, believed that English listening was "not important at all". Principally, it could be deduced that most of the percentage of sophomores who have acknowledged the importance of listening dominated the overall statistic; however, there has been even so a small number of them who possessed no positive perception of it.

c. Students’ self-evaluation of their listening skills

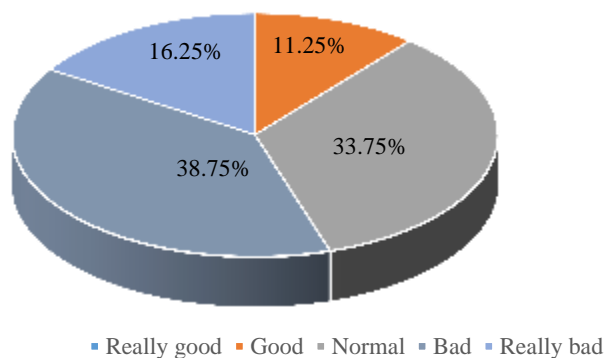


Figure 4.4. Students' self-evaluation of their listening skills

Figure 4.4 demonstrates different evaluation of students of their listening skills. By looking at the chart, it can be seen that the majority of students (31/80), equivalent to 38.75%, of them said that their listening skills were "bad". The next was 27/80 students who stated their listening skills were "normal" with 33.75%. Further, 16.25% of the participants (13/80) said that their skills were "really bad". Aside from that, only 9/80 students, equivalent to 11.25%, declared they have "good" listening skills. Finally, it was surprising to the researcher that none of the participant self-evaluated that they had "really good" English listening skills. By means of the students’ responses to these questions, it built to the conclusion that most of the sophomores have bad listening skills.

d. Students’ frequency of practicing for listening skills

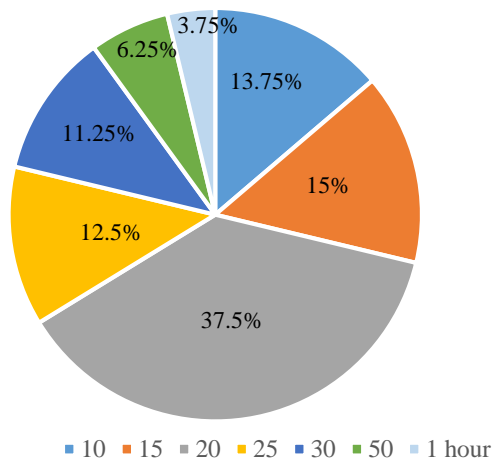


Figure 4.5. Students’ frequency of practicing for listening skills

As can be observed from Figure 4.5, it goes without saying that the majority of students (30/80), equivalent to 37.5%, spent 20 minutes studying English listening. Next, 12 in the sum of 80 (15%) sophomores declared they spent 15 minutes per day studying listening. Further, 13.75% (11/80) of the participants reported that 10 minutes was their answer. It took 25 minutes for 10 of them (12.5%) to study listening everyday. It is obvious that the participants of the study spent less and less time for practicing listening skills: 9 (11.25%), 5 (6.25%) and 3 (3.75%) for 30 minutes, 50 minutes and 1 hour, respectively. By means of the students’ responses to this question, it built to the conclusion that the frequency of their practicing for listening skills remained at a moderate level.

4.1.1.1.2 Students' difficulties in listening

4.1.1.1.2.1 Linguistic factors

a. Difficulties about vocabulary

SA= Strongly agree; A= Agree; NI= No idea; D=Disagree; SD= Strongly disagree

Statement		SA	A	NI	D	SD
A. Vocabulary	1. My vocabulary is quite poor.	12.5%	46.25%	16.25%	15%	10%
	2. It is difficult to understand listening texts in which there are too many unfamiliar words.	22.5%	53.75%	12.5%	11.25%	0%
	3. I get confused with a word has more than one meaning when listening.	17.5%	55%	18.75%	6.25%	2.5%

Table 4.1. Difficulties in vocabulary

Table 4.1 embraced three statements in total that indicated English course 16 sophomores’ difficulties in vocabulary. Starting with statement 1, over 60% of students showed their agreement, consisting of 12.5% (10/80) strongly agreed, and 46,25% (37/80) agreed with the statement. The residuals with 16.25% (13/80) had no ideas. Finally, there were 25% of students disagreed with the statement, with 12/80 students disagreed (15%) and 8/10 strongly disagreed (10%). Hence, it came to the conclusion that almost every English-majored sophomores admitted that their vocabular is poor.

In terms of statement 2, over 70% of students containing 22.5% (18/80) strongly agreed and 53.75% (43/80) agreed with the statement. The percentage of disagreement stayed at lower rates with 11.25% (9/80) while 10 others (12.5%) did not take any side. There was no one offering strong disagreement. These figures showed that it was difficult to understand listening texts in which there are too many unfamiliar words.

Similar to statement 2, statement 3 experienced the same percentage of the agreement from participants. Particularly, more than 70% of juniors (17.5% (14/80) and 55% (44/80) combined) successively expressed strong

concurrency as well as assent to the statement. Despite this, 6.25% (5/80) disagreed and 2.5% (2/80) strongly disagreed with the statement, and 18.75% (15/80) of participants uttered no comments.

As a whole, from these three statements' findings, it could be inferred that most of the students had an adequate awareness about their difficulties in vocabulary.

b. Difficulties about grammar

Statement		SA	A	NI	D	SD
B. Grammar	4. I usually apply Vietnamese structure to English structure when listening.	27.5%	42.5%	10%	15%	5%
	5. I frequently make mistakes with tenses when listening.	22.5%	47.5%	10%	15%	5%
	6. I can't apply English grammar logically when listening.	20%	47.5%	17.5%	12.5%	2.5%

Table 4.2. Difficulties in grammar

Continuing with students' problems relevant to grammar, Table 4.2 was made up of three statements as can be seen above.

First of all for statement 4, 22 of them (27.5%) strongly agreed and 34/80 (42.5%) of juniors agreed with the fact that they usually apply Vietnamese structure to English structure when listening. The remaining consisted of 10% (8/80), 15% (12/80), and 5% (4/80) of students having no ideas, disagreed and strongly disagreed with this statement, listed in succession.

The next one was statement 5, in which more than half of the respondents agreed with the statement. To be more specific, 22.5% (18/80) executed strong agreement and 47.5% (38/40) illustrated their concurrence. On the contrary, 8 students, corresponding to 10% stayed hesitated and the residual, including 15% (12/80) and 5% (4/80) disagreed and totally disagreed with the statement respectively. Through the findings from this statement, it led to the conclusion that students frequently make mistakes with tenses when listening.

Turning to the last statement in the table, statement 6. Only 12 students, composing of 10/80 (12.5%) and 2/80 (2.5%), disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement. By contrast, there were 16 students (20%) giving strong agreement, along with the concurrence of 47 sophomores (47.5%). There were 14 students (17.5%) gave no idea with the statement.

Judging from the three aforementioned statements, it is obvious that sophomores majoring in English have been dealing with certain difficulties in grammar.

c. Difficulties about pronunciation

Statement		SA	A	NI	D	SD
C. Pronunciation	7. I can't identify the words with unfamiliar pronunciation.	25%	50%	17.5%	7.5%	0%
	8. Using incorrect pronunciation makes me confused when listening.	18.75%	56.25%	12.5%	8.75%	3.75%
	9. I have difficulties with stress, linking words, intonation and final sounds when studying listening.	22.5%	48.75%	17.5%	8.75%	2.5%

Table 4.3. Difficulties in pronunciation

Relation to Table 4.3 which included problems of sophomores related to pronunciation. This table involved three statements.

According to statement 7's results, three-fourths of participants, specifically 20 of them (25%) strongly agreed and 40/80 (50%) of students agreed with the fact that they can't identify the words with unfamiliar pronunciation. The residuals with 17.5% (14/80) had no ideas, and 7.5% (6/80) disagreed. There was no one offering strong disagreement.

Moving to statement 8, three-fourths of participants agreed with using incorrect pronunciation makes them confused when listening. More specifically, 18.75% (15/80) offered strong agreement and 56.25% (45/80) expressed their agreement. On the other hand, there were just 8.75% (7/80) of disagreement and 3.75% (3/80) strong disagreement made by any participants in this statement. There were 10 students (12.5%) gave no idea.

As for the last statement in the table, statement 9. Only 9 students, composing of 7/80 (8.75%) and 2/80 (2.5%), disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement, listed in succession. In contrast, there were 18/80 students (22.5%) strongly agreed and 39/80 students (48.75%) agreed with the statement. Finally, 14/80 sophomores (17.5%) offered no idea if they have difficulties with stress, linking words, intonation and final sounds when studying listening.

Based on statistics presented above, there is no debate that problems relevant to pronunciation definitely held students back from the process of learning English listening skills.

d. Difficulties about background knowledge

Statement		SA	A	NI	D	SD
D. Background knowledge	10. Lacking background knowledge makes me anxious when listening.	22.5%	58.75%	11.25%	5%	2.5%
	11. I often have difficulties in receiving and answering the speaker's message due to lacking background knowledge.	27.5%	46.25%	13.75%	12.5%	0%
	12. It is difficult to studying listening if I have to make inferences from text that rely on background knowledge.	17.5%	53.75%	21.25%	5%	2.5%

Table 4.4. Difficulties in background knowledge

Table 4.4 including three statements that went on sophomores' difficulties in background knowledge. Starting with statement 10, more than 80% of the participants agreed with the fact that lacking background knowledge makes them anxious when listening. More specifically, 22.5% (18/80) and 58.75% (47/80) strongly agreed and agreed with the statement respectively. The remaining consisted of 11.25% (9/80), 5% (4/80), and 2.5% (2/80) of students had no idea, disagreed and strongly disagreed with this statement, listed in succession.

The next one was statement 11, more than two thirds of the participants, particularly 22 of them (27.5%) strongly agreed and 37/80 (46.25%) of sophomores agreed with the fact that they often have difficulties in receiving and answering the speaker's message due to lacking background knowledge. On the other hand, there were 11 of the sophomores (13.75%) gave no idea and 10/80 (12.5%) disagreed with this statement. There was no one strongly disagreed with this statement. Turning to the last statement in the table, statement 12. There were 14/80 students (17.5%) giving strong agreement toward the fact that it is difficult to studying listening if they have to make inferences from text that rely on background knowledge, along with the concurrence of 43/80 sophomores (53.75%). By contrast, only 6 students, composing of 4/80 (5%) and 2/80 (2.5%), disagreed with the statement. Further, there were 17 sophomores (21.25%) gave no idea.

Thus, it found that sophomores majoring in English have been dealing with certain difficulties in background knowledge throughout higher percentages of the agreement. As a result, this has posed some limitations in studying English listening.

4.1.1.2.2. Listening comprehension problems

a. Problems related to listening environment

Statement		SA	A	NI	D	SD
E. Listening environment	13. An ideal place for studying listening is a quiet classroom.	31.25%	56.25%	8.75%	3.75%	0%
	14. I can't focus on my listening if I'm studying in a noisy environment.	47.5%	36.25%	10%	6.25%	0%
	15. Noisy sounds have a big impact on my listening.	37.5%	43.75%	10%	6.25%	2.5%

Table 4.5. Problems related to listening environment

Observing Table 4.5, it was recognizable that students held various perspectives toward problems related to the listening environment.

Beginning with statement 13, more than 80% of participants (31.25% (25/80) "strongly agree" and 56.25% (45/80) "agree") agreed that an ideal place for studying listening is a quiet classroom. However, 7 respondents (8.75%) did not take any side and there were merely 3 students, equivalent to 3.75% disagreeing with the statement.

Moving to statement 14, 8/80 students (10%) gave no idea while 5/80 students (6.25%) disagreed with the statement and none of the participants strongly disagreed. On the other hand, there were more than 80% of sophomores acknowledged the fact that they can't focus on their listening if they're studying in a noisy environment. More specifically, 38/80 students strongly agreed (47.5%) and 29/80 students (36.25%) agreed with the statement. It was noticeable that the number of students who strongly agreed were higher than those who agreed, compared with the previous statements. Continuing with the last statement of the table, there were 37.5% (30/80) and 43.75% (35/80) of the participants strongly agreed and agreed with the fact that noisy sounds have a big impact on their listening, listed in succession. In contrast, there were 7 students disagreed with the statement (6.25% (5/80) disagreed and 2.5% (2/80) strongly disagreed). 8 of the participants (10%) did not take any side.

During the statistic analysis above, there is no doubt that the listening environment intensely affected the listening comprehension of English-majored sophomores.

b. Problems related to different accents

	Statement	SA	A	NI	D	SD
F. Different accents	16. The English accent is completely different from what I learned in high school.	31.25%	41.25%	17.5%	7.5%	2.5%
	17. I can't recognize the English native speakers' accent.	25%	46.25%	15%	8.75%	5%
	18. Vietnamese has a big influence on my English accent.	45%	40%	12.5%	2.5%	0%

Table 4.6. Problems related to different accents.

Carrying on with problems related to different accents that sophomores have encountered while writing. Table 4.6 conveyed more information about this throughout three statements.

The first one was statement 16. 25 sophomores among the participants (31.25%) chose "strongly agreed"; at the same instant, 33/80 (41.25%) of students agreed with the fact that the English accent is completely different from what they learned in high school. The students who chose "no idea" was 17.5% (14/80). The number of students disagreeing with the statement were low, particularly 6/80 (7.5%) disagreed and 2/80 (2.5%) strongly disagreed.

In terms of statement 17, more than half of the respondents agreed with the statement. To be more specific, 25% (20/80) chose "strongly agree" and 46.25% (37/80) picked "agree". In addition, 12 students, corresponding to 15% stayed hesitant. The rest did not agree, with 8.75% (7/80) disagreed and 5% (4/80) strongly disagreed. Thanks to the findings presented, it could be concluded that the sophomores couldn't recognize the English native speakers' accent.

Relation to the final statement in the table, statement 18 included 2 out of 80 students (2.5%) illustrating their disagreement. On the contrary, there were 36 students (45%) indicating strong agreement, along with the concurrence of 32 juniors (40%). Plus, the portion of students who ticked on the column of "no idea" was 12.5% (10/80). To conclude, Vietnamese has a big influence on the sophomores' English accent, which affects their listening skill.

c. Problems related to speakers' speed

	Statement	SA	A	NI	D	SD
G. Speakers' speed	19. The native speakers usually speak really fast in listening dialogues.	25%	56.25%	8.75%	6.25%	3.75%
	20. The speakers' speed is too fast for me to keep up with the listening text.	22.5%	56.25%	7.5%	12.5%	1.25%

	21. If the speakers use a reasonable speed, I can listen much easier.	27.5%	51.25%	8.75%	12.5%	0%
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Table 4.7. Problems related to speakers' speed.

Taking a look at table 4.7, it is possible to say that the English-majored sophomores had different opinions about speakers' speed through three statements.

Starting with statement 19, over 80% of students consisting of 25% (20/80) strongly agreed, and 56,25% (45/80) agreed with the statement. 7/80 sophomores (8.75%) had no ideas. Finally, there were 10% of students disagreed with the statement, with 5/80 students disagreed (6.25%) and 3/10 strongly disagreed (3.75%). Hence, it came to the conclusion that almost every English-majored sophomores agreed that the native speakers usually speak really fast in listening dialogues.

In terms of statement 20, almost 80% of students containing 22.5% (18/80) strongly agreed and 56.25% (45/80) agreed with the statement. There were 12.5% (10/80) disagreed and 1.25% (1/80) strongly disagreed while 6 others (7.5%) did not take any side. These figures showed that most students found that the speakers' speed is too fast for them to keep up with the listening text.

Similar to statement 20, statement 21 experienced almost the same percentage of the agreement from participants. Particularly, almost 80% of juniors (27.5% (22/80) and 51.25% (41/80) combined) successively expressed strong concurrency as well as assent to the statement. The percentage of disagreement stayed at lower rates with 12.5% (10/80) while 7 others (8.75%) did not take any side. There was no one offering strong disagreement.

As a whole, from these three statements' findings, it could be inferred that most of the students had difficulties related to the speakers' speed in listening.

d. Problems related to psychological factors

Statement		SA	A	NI	D	SD
H. Psychological factors	22. I am too shy, worried and unprepared to answer the teachers' questions after listening to the CD-ROM.	25%	53.75%	7.5%	11.25%	2.5%
	23. I'm unsure about the exact meaning of the word when listening.	20%	43.75%	22.5%	12.5%	1.25%
	24. I lack of interest and even get bored with studying listening.	27.5%	43.75%	16.25%	10%	2.5%

Table 4.8. Problems related to psychological factors.

As seen from the last table, Table 4.8 involved three statements. They indicated psychological factors that English-majored sophomores have faced during the process of studying listening.

To begin with statement 22, more than 70% of respondents admitted that they were too shy, worried and unprepared to answer the teachers' questions after listening to the CD-ROM. In particular, 25% (20/80) for "strongly agree" and 53.75% (43/80) for "agree". However, 6 participants (7.5%) performed in hesitation and there were 11 students, embracing 9/80 (11.25%) and 2/80 (2.5%) choosing "disagree", "strongly disagree" in succession.

Concerning statement 23's results, there were 11 students did not agree with the statement, particularly 10/80 (12.5%) disagreed and 1/80 (1.25%) strongly disagreed. In contrast, 16 students (20%) indicating their strong agreement and 35 students (43.75%) exposed their agreement. Aside from that, there were 18/80 students (22.5%) stayed neutral. The ultimate results pointed out that students were unsure about the exact meaning of the word when listening.

For the last statement in the table, statement 24, over 70% of the sophomores consented to the statement (the combination of 27.5% (22/80) strong agreements and 43.75% (35/80) agreements). Meantime, 16.25% of participants (13/80) showed hesitation, and 10 respondents, including 8/80 (10%) and 2/80 (2.5%) disagreed and strongly disagreed successively. It is obvious to say that most sophomores agreed with the statement "I lack of interest and even get bored with studying listening".

Through analyzing the findings in this table, it found that students in English course 16 had been handling a wide range of psychological problems.

4.1.2. Results from the interview

As reported in chapter 3, merely one instrument is not virtually enough for conducting an intensive and reliable research. Consequently, in addition to the questionnaire, the interview is equally designed to include three questions, thereupon, they are revised and delivered to 10 sophomores. After assembling those papers, the researcher analyzed to examine what difficulties they are facing and what listening strategies students apply.

First of all, when being asked, "Do you think English listening is easy or difficult? Why and why not?" there were 9/10 interviewees admitted that they found it difficult to study listening. Besides, they also revealed they encountered many difficulties in this subject, such as pronunciation and vocabulary. Additionally, different accents and the speaking speed of speakers made them confused. In contrast, one student said that listening did not challenge her, she said, "I found it difficult at first, but it got better later on". It seemed that listening is a difficult subject for the sophomores because of the pronunciation, vocabulary, speaking speed, etc.

Secondly, for the next question, "What difficulties do you often encounter when studying English listening?", the results of the interviews in accord with the responds of questionnaires. All of students (10/10) had some difficulties in listening including vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, environment and background knowledge. Besides, "Spoken words move fast and can only be heard once or twice." expressed by one student. It could be said that during listening process, these above factors greatly affected students. They would not hear without vocabulary, they would not distinguish words when the speakers had many different accents and intonations. Furthermore, they had troubles with keeping up with the speakers. Finally, they seemed to have difficulties related to listening environment. "I can't focus on listening if there is noise around the classroom", said by one interviewee.

Lastly, the last question, "What do you do to improve your English listening?". They had different solutions to improve their listening skills. There were 5/10 students who answered they watched videos that specialize in English listening practice on YouTube and other social platforms like TikTok. Next, there were 3/10 students who said that they watched some films and listened to songs in English. Finally, there were 3 students suggested playing games with the default language is English, using Cambridge dictionary to check for the correct pronunciation and taking an English class, respectively. It could be implied that listening is difficult, but there are different ways to improve it.

Generally, after analyzing the interviews, English-majored sophomores had some problems in listening. It was the fact that listening was an uneasy skill, it took learners a lot of time to study and improve their listening skills.

4.2. Discussion

According to the answers by the sophomores through the questionnaire, they have been studying English for 7-12 years but they still had different difficulties in studying listening. Although they faced many drawbacks in listening, learning English listening was important in their thought. Regarding students' evaluation about their own listening skill, most of students rated that their listening skills were bad. After analyzing the survey of the questionnaires and the paper interview, it was clear that students faced various problems in linguistic factors (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and background knowledge) and listening comprehension (listening environment, different accents, speakers' speed and psychological factors).

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, the conclusions, implications, limitations and recommendations are mentioned for further research.

5.1. Conclusions

Nowadays, English plays an important role in our life. It is the international language used in education, economy, tourism, etc. In addition to this, English is also used in daily communication. Therefore, students should acquire good English skills, especially listening ones, to adapt to the modern life. However, the students still encounter many difficulties in listening. This research is conducted so as to find out the difficulties students are facing and help them solve problems and find better methods of learning English listening.

The results from analysis of the questionnaires and paper interview showed that students faced various kinds of difficulties in studying listening: linguistic factors (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and background knowledge) and listening comprehension (listening environment, different accents, speakers' speed and psychological factors).

The result of this study has some similarities to three previous studies by different authors. The first study named "Difficulties in Listening of English-Majored Sophomores at Tay Do University in Vietnam" conducted by Luu (2022), she showed that vocabulary, pronunciation, background knowledge and psychological factors were the difficulties that the sophomores faced in studying listening. She believed that students have to make a lot of efforts to overcome their difficulties and they should self-study and practice listening more to increase their skills.

Vo & Nguyen in 2021 conducted a study named "VIETNAMESE ENGLISH-majored students' use of listening strategies" that brought into light the fact that Vietnamese English-majored learners employed listening strategies at a relatively high frequency. Metacognitive strategies were found to be most commonly and frequently used compared to the cognitive and socio-affective groups. It also informed that predicting, planning, monitoring, resourcing, repetition, lowering anxiety and cooperation topped the list of individual strategies that the students relied on in listening task implementation. With reference to the differences in strategy use between the two groups of effective and less effective listeners, although no significant discrepancies were found in relation to their general use of the three overarching strategy groups, evidence suggested that more proficient listeners seemed to make use more of problem identification, elaboration, grouping and lowering anxiety. Less proficient listeners, however, had a tendency to resort more to translation, transfer, resourcing and taking emotional temperature beside lowering anxiety. These findings provide important implications for both learners and teachers in reference to the identification of what listening strategies should be further incorporated and promoted in the training programs for these English-majored groups of learners.

Another one named "A study on some difficulties encountered by second-year English-majored students In Learning English listening skill online at Hai Phong Management And Technology University" by Nguyen in 2020 showed listening problems and linguistic problems were two kinds of difficulties faced by students in learning listening online, in which linguistic ones bring more challenges to students. In addition, she found that lack of vocabulary, bad pronunciation, mistaking in connected speech, unfamiliar accents, fast speed rate, poor English spoken structures, misunderstanding when listening has repetition or hesitation, less concentration of listeners caused by background noise were eight different categories that challenged students in listening. Among them, three most difficult ones fall into speech rate, hesitation or repetition in spontaneous speech and connected speech and the least difficult one is of vocabulary.

To sum up, investigating the listening difficulties is the useful method to help English-majored sophomores learn listening effectively. From these mentioned difficulties, students can offer appropriate solution for their improvement.

5.2. Implications

Based on these results of the study, there are many implications that the researcher would like to refer to which might be helpful English learners in listening are recommended by Mai (2022) in the study entitled "An investigation into English-majored students' difficulties in doing their listening comprehension tasks". For students, they should spend more time practicing at home. They should spend at least 30 minutes listening to what they enjoy such as watching films in English and listening to English songs. Moreover, the students ought to listen frequently to be accustomed to a variety of topics. They should listen to listening texts starting from familiar to unfamiliar topics to enrich sociocultural knowledge. For teachers, English teachers should create an interesting listening environment. They are able to begin lessons by playing exciting games related to English. In addition, teachers also allow their students to listen to English songs because they do not feel bored or sleepy. Moreover, teachers should choose listening texts that are suitable for their students' level. Similarly, teachers also seek suitable teaching methods which may support students in enhancing their listening skills. Next, teachers should not test their students' listening comprehension if they cannot find a quiet place to conduct the test. It is not fair if students have to do listening comprehension tasks in such a thunderous place. Finally, due to the limitation of this study, the study only explored students' difficulties in doing listening comprehension tasks, so future researchers should seek possible solutions for students to overcome these listening problems.

Personally, the researcher suggests that students should be perceive their difficulties in listening they are running into, e.g difficulties in pronunciation or problems related to psychological factors, so that they can apply to suitable methods to improve their listening skills. Next, students need to practice and enhance their vocabulary. They can search for words they need on the dictionary. Cambridge is a good online dictionary that students can both learn the word's definition, as well as its pronunciation. In addition, the researcher suggests that students should watch some education videos on platforms like YouTube and TEDTalk so that they can improve their pronunciation and get used to different accents of native English speakers. Finally, learning and entertaining at the same time is also suggested if this method is applied correctly, e.g. playing games and listening to music in English.

5.3. Limitations

Certain limitations are unavoidable for this study. Firstly, the study only focused on linguistic factors and listening comprehension due to time constraints and the researchers' limited ability and experience. Secondly, some students were not enthusiastic when answering, which makes a bit difficult for the researcher. In addition, some of the interviewees could not make their ideas clear when interviewing. Finally, although there were two instruments used in this study, it did not mean students' difficulties when listening were fully discovered.

5.4. Recommendations

The researcher hopes that further studies should include more aspects of listening difficulties. Based on the research results, other researchers can be able to do more in-depth research on the difficulties encountered by students in listening. Hopefully, this study will be a source of supplementary data for other researchers when finding difficulties in listening for both English-majored and non English-majored students. From there, teachers can find out appropriate teaching methods and listening becomes more interesting to students.

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