

**BỘ GIÁO DỤC VÀ ĐÀO TẠO
TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC DÂN LẬP HẢI PHÒNG**



ISO 9001 : 2008

KHÓA LUẬN TỐT NGHIỆP

NGÀNH: NGOẠI NGỮ

HẢI PHÒNG - 2012

**HAIPHONG PRIVATE UNIVERSITY
FOREIGN LANGUAGES DEPARTMENT**

GRADUATION PAPER

**SOME OBSTACLES FACING HPU 2ND YEAR
ENGLISH MAJORS IN ENGLISH LISTENING
COMPREHENSION AND SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS**

**By:
Vu Thi Thu Trang**

**Class:
NA1202**

**Supervisor:
Nguyen Thi Quynh Hoa, (M.A.)**

HAI PHONG - 2012

**BỘ GIÁO DỤC VÀ ĐÀO TẠO
TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC DÂN LẬP HẢI PHÒNG**

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Ngày..... tháng..... năm 2012

Người chấm phản biện

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Ms. Nguyen Thi Quynh Hoa for her generous assistance, enthusiastic guidance and constructive supervision throughout my thesis. Without her help, this graduation paper would not have been completed.

I also wish to acknowledge indebtedness to all the teachers at Faculty of Foreign Languages, HPU for their valuable lectures and instructions during the past years, which has helped me much in completing the final task.

I am grateful to HPU 2nd year English majors and all the English teachers for their enthusiastic participation in completing my survey questionnaires.

Finally yet importantly, I would like to thank my family members who always stand by my side while the work was in process.

Haiphong, July 2012

Student

Vu Thi Thu Trang

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PART I: INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale

Being good at communication in English particularly and in foreign languages generally is the desire of all foreign language learners. However, it requires them to speak and to listen well in which listening seems the most challenging task for

every student. In fact, there are many factors affecting the learners in listening acquisition. Consequently, it is very difficult for them to master this skill.

Like students from different universities, the writer has faced many difficulties in listening. With four - year experience in learning the skill and from what her observed in practicing listening of other classmates, it can be found that many students failed in practicing listening skill. Some of them complained that they felt unconfident with listening tasks so they could hardly understand the spoken messages.

All these above reasons have inspired the writer to do research on listening skill and as a result, a research title goes as ***“Some obstacles facing HPU 2nd year English majors in English listening comprehension and suggested solutions”***

2. Aims of the study

The study has two main purposes as follows:

- * Finding out the difficulties encountered by 2nd year English majors in listening comprehension.
- * Giving solutions to these problems

3. Research questions

The study is conducted to answer the following questions:

- * What difficulties do HPU 2nd year English majors face in listening comprehension?
- * What methods should be used to help HPU English major students overcome their difficulties?

4. The significance of the study

Although listening has been one of the most common skills, there are few studies on listening problems and factors affecting listening ability. The most well known one is done by Boyle (1984) identifying and classifying factors affecting listening comprehension. This thesis is designed to investigate second year English major students' obstacles and causes of those difficulties especially it is done by a HPU student of English so it can be more subjective and appropriate to the ELT situation in HPU.

5. Scope of the study

The study limits itself at finding out the difficulties in learning listening skill of second year English majors. Moreover, the researcher concentrates on studying linguistic problems (vocabulary, grammar, connected speech, stress and intonation, accents, speech rate) and non – linguistic ones (skills, psychology, environment, social and cultural knowledge) accessed in the view of both students and lecturers.

6. Methods of the study

The following methods are employed to collect data for the study:

- Quantitative method (Two survey questionnaires were designed with the participants of English teachers and major students at Hai Phong Private University.
- Direct observation and conversation

The major source of data for the study was students' survey questionnaire respondents while direct observation and conversation applied with an aim to get more information for any confirmation of the findings.

7. Design of the study

This study consists of three main parts: the introduction, the development and the conclusion.

Part I: Introduction presents the rationales, aims, research questions, significance, scope, method and design of the study.

Part II: Development is divided into 4 chapters:

Chapter 1: Theoretical background - deals with the concepts including listening, types of listening, listening comprehension, listening comprehension process, and potential difficulties in listening comprehension.

Chapter 2: Methodology - gives the situation analysis, subjects, and data collection instruments.

Chapter 3: Data Analysis – shows the detailed results of the survey and a comprehensive analysis on the data collected.

Chapter 4 - Findings, discussions and recommendations – refers to major findings, discussions and offers some recommendations for improving students' listening comprehension.

Part III is the Conclusion presenting an overview of the study, suggestions for further research and limitations of the study.

PART II: DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1. LISTENING

1.1. Definition of listening

Listening is considered one of the most important parts of the oral communication. The term is used in order to make oral communication effective. There was an idea that “Students spend 20 percent of all school related hours just listening. If television watching and one-half of conversations are included, students spend approximately 50 percent of their waking hours just listening. For those hours spent in the classroom, the amount of listening time can be almost 100 percent.” Obviously, it is believed that listening is a significant and essential area of development in a native language and in a second language; therefore, there have been numerous definitions of listening and listening skill.

According to Howatt and Dakin (1974), listening is ability to identify and understand what others are saying. This process involves understanding a speaker’s accent and pronunciation, the speaker’s grammar and vocabulary and comprehension of meaning. An able listener is capable of doing these four things simultaneously.

In addition, Lesley Barker (2001) states that: “Listening, however, is more than just being able to hear and understand what someone else says, listening skills involve etiquette, asking for clarification, showing empathy and providing an appropriate response.”

According to Bulletin (1952), listening is one of the fundamental language skills. It's a

medium through which children, young people and adults gain a large portion of their education-their information, their understanding of the world and of human affairs, their ideals, sense of values, and their appreciation.

Rubin (1995) conceived listening as an active process in which a listener selects and interprets information, which comes from auditory and visual clues in order to define what is going on and what the speakers are trying to express.

Purdy (1991) defined listening as “the active and dynamic process of attending, perceiving, interpreting, remembering and responding to the expressed verbal and non-verbal needs, concerns and information offered by the human beings”. Carol (1993) described listening as a set of activities that involve “the individual’s capacity to apprehend, recognize, discriminate or even ignore”.

Wolvin and Coakley (1985) points out that listening is “the process of receiving, attending to and assigning meaning to aural stimuli”. This definition suggests that listening is a complex, problem-solving skill. The task of listening is more than perception of sound. This view of listening is in accordance with second-language theory which considers listening to spoken language as an active and complex process in which listeners focus on selected aspects of aural input, construct meaning, and relate what they hear to existing knowledge (O’Malley & Chamot, 1989; Byrnes, 1984; Richards, 1985; Holand, 1983).

Recently, Imhof (1998) stated that listening is “the active process of selecting and integrating relevant information from acoustic input and this process is controlled by personal intentions which is critical to listening”. Rost (2002) confirmed, “Listening is experiencing contextual effects” which can be translated as “listening as a neurological event (experiencing) overlaying a cognitive event creating a change in a representation”, etc

1.2 Classification of listening

Almost the learners of English will sooner or later, find themselves in a variety of situation where they need or want to listen to English being used in the real-life for arrange of purposes. However, they have to face many difficulties because there is the big difference between the listening activities in the classroom and actual situations. In the class, the learners listened to the very grammatical standard dialogues, conversations or presentations. The speakers often speak at perfectly controlled speed, with perfect voice tone, accent and correct grammar. The learners even had the preparation already and knew clearly about the topic that they are going to listen to.

That is the reason why the learners can listen very well. Whereas, in the real-life conversations, learners encounter various people speak with different accent, speed and voice tone without paying attention to grammar. The speakers also can use the difficult words, idioms, proverbs, or even the slang words, etc. As a result, the learners cannot listen to perfectly.

In the real-life, different situations call for different types of listening, and as your listening skills evolve, so will your ability to hear what someone is really saying. There are many types of listening. However, in general and according to Adian (1995), there are two ways, which people often listen in the real- life. They are “casual” listening and “focused” listening. “Casual” listening (in another word, we call it “Appreciative Listening”). This is one of the most enjoyable types of listening, and it comes naturally for many people.

There are not a lot of responses necessary in appreciative listening, though groups of listeners might often talk among themselves to process the experience. Appreciative listening is most often used when people listen to music, plays, concerts or other performances. The typical feature is that we do not listen carefully and intentionally, therefore we may not remember much of what we hear or even there is nothing in our mind. “Focused” listening (or

Informational listening. This is simple, straightforward listening. The speaker intends to get a message across, and the listener's goal should be to understand that message as completely as possible. The listener might need to ask questions or request clarification to get the full message. In this case, we often listen with much attention for a particular purpose but we do not listen to everything we hear with equal concentration. For instance, we want to know the answer to a question, we will ask and expect to hear the relevant response. This leads to our “listening out” for certain key phrases or words. Even when listening to entertainment such as plays, jokes or songs we have a definite purpose (enjoyment), we want to know what is coming next, and we expect it to cohere with what went before. There is an association between listener expectation and purpose and his comprehension. If the listener expects and needs are intentional, his listening is likely accurately perceived and understood than that which is unexpected, irrelevant or helpful.

According to Rixon (1986) and Hublard, R and others (1984), there are two main kinds of listening in classroom, they are intensive listening and extensive listening.

Intensive listening (Comprehensive/ Informative Listening). That means students listen carefully for the detailed information, full comprehension or the content of the message. Anytime students listen to instructions or to a lecture from an instructor, listening to the announcement or weather forecast, they are using informative listening. The important aspect of this type of listening is whether the listener understands the message being relayed by the speaker. If the listener misunderstands or does not pay close attention, informative listening is affected.

This kind of listening helps learners develop their listening skill or knowledge of the language in their effort to do exercises or other activities. The passage should be short so that learners have chances to get to grip with the content.

They also feel it easy, interesting and encouraging when they listen to a short passage. In contradiction, Extensive listening (Appreciative listening) is free and general listening to natural language for general ideas, not for particular details. It is the art of listening for pleasure and interest. When people enjoy a concert, speech, short jokes or poems, etc, they are experiencing appreciative listening. They are not asked to do any language work and they can do their listening freely without any pressure. Moreover, the topics are various and entertaining, therefore they are motivated to develop their listening skill.

Wolvin and Coakly (1988, 1993) have introduced another categorization of listening. They identified five types of listening:

- (1) Discrimination listening
- (2) Listening for comprehension
- (3) Therapeutic (empathic) listening
- (4) Critical listening
- (5) Appreciative listening

Discriminative listening is the most basic type of listening, whereby the difference between different sounds is identified. If listener cannot hear differences, they cannot make sense of the meaning that is expressed by such differences. As a result, a person from one country finds it difficult to speak another language perfectly. Likewise, a person who cannot hear the subtleties of emotional variation in another person's voice will be less likely to be able to discern the emotions the other person is experiencing.

The next step beyond discriminating between different sound and sights is to make sense of them. To comprehend the meaning requires having a lexicon of words, rules of grammar and syntax by which we can understand what others are saying. The visual components of communication and an understanding of body language also help us understand what the other person is really

meaning. Comprehension listening is also known as content listening, informative listening and full listening.

In therapeutic listening, the listener has a purpose of not only empathizing with the speaker but also to use this deep connection in order to help the speaker understand, change or develop in some way. Moreover, this kind of listening happens wherever and whenever in life. Critical listening is listening in order to evaluate and judge, forming opinion about what is being said. Judgment includes assessing strengths and weaknesses, agreement and approval. This form of listening requires significant real-time cognitive effort as the listener analyzes what is being said, relating it to existing knowledge and rules. In appreciative listening, we seek certain information which will appreciate, for example that which helps meet our needs and goals. We use appreciative listening when we are listening to good music, poetry or maybe even the stirring words of a great leader.

Beside the above well-known classifications, Rost's theory (1990) introduced four types of listening suggested by Garvin (1985) with small modification:

- (1) Transactional listening
- (2) Interactional listening
- (3) Critical listening
- (4) Recreational listening

Transactional listening typically occurs in formal listening settings such as a lecture. In these situations, the listener has limited opportunities to interfere or to collaborate with a speaker for negotiating message meaning. Whereas, interactional listening, according to Rost is relevant to recognizing the personal component of a message. The listener is explicitly engaged in the cooperation with a speaker for communicative purposes and focuses on building a personal relationship with the speaker. Regarding critical listening ,

he addressed that critical listening similar to the one suggested by Wolvin and Coakly (1988, 1993), indicating the act of evaluating reasoning and evidence, while recreational listening requires a listener to be involved in appreciating random or integrating aspects of an event. He further stated that listening requests a cognitive and social skill as well as a linguistic skill, and that the purpose of listening guides a listener as he/ she listens.

Differently, Ur (1984) is another L2 researcher who classified listening by its function. To her point of view, there are two types of listening: listening for perception and listening for comprehension. To the former, it is the act of listening to perceive “the different sounds, sound-combinations and stress and intonation patterns of foreign language”. While listening for comprehension is relevant to content understanding and it is divided into two sub-categories, passive listening for comprehension implying the act of making the basic for other language skills with imaginative or logical thought and active listening for comprehension. Rather, she insisted that listening for comprehension should be considered as a continuum from passive listening on the left side to active listening on the right side of continuum.

2. LISTENING COMPREHENSION

2.1 Defining listening comprehension

There are some traditional views that listening is considered a passive language skill alongside the reading skill. It means that learners are almost passive in practicing listening skill in the classroom. The learners mainly have to hear the message; they only try to elicit the meaning from the individual syntactic and semantic components of the utterance and the manner in which it is spoken. The method of testing the comprehension of the learners is based on the ability to remember the utterance, which they have just heard. Obviously, this method is not effective as the ability to remember the utterance does not mean that the listener can understand the message. In fact,

the learners are not provided enough information about what they are going to hear before the tape plays and they cope with wide range of problems while they are listening and the result is that they cannot get any listening experience from the teacher.

However, in the past years, some present studies on listening comprehension have to come to another view in which the role of listeners is thought to be active.

One of the most notable definitions of listening comprehension is of Gary Buck. He points out that: “listening comprehension is an active process of constructing”. For years, many meaning and this is done by applying knowledge to the incoming” in which “numbers of different types of knowledge are involved: both linguistic sound and non-linguistic knowledge”.

To put in another way, Gary Buck concludes, “comprehension is affected by a wide range of variables and that potentially any characteristic of the speaker, the situation or the listener can affect the comprehension of the message.” In other words, comprehension of a spoken message can either be isolated word recognition within the sound stream, phrase or formula recognition, clause or sentence, and extended speech comprehension (Scarcella and Oxford, 1992)

Littlewood (1981) also expressed the same viewpoint to Gary Buck to listening comprehension. He affirmed that listening demands active involvement from the hearer. In order to construct the message that the speaker intends, the hearer must actively contribute knowledge from both linguistic and nonlinguistic sources. The nature of listening comprehension means that the hearer should be encouraged to engage in an active process of listening for meanings, using not only the linguistic cues but also has nonlinguistic knowledge.

Aderson and Lynch (Listening, 1995, Oxford University Press) have different point of view. They consider the listener as active model builder. They say that in order to listen successfully they have to construct our own “coherent interpretation” of any spoken message. Both parts of this term are important. First, it needs to be coherent both context and the word in general. Second, it is an interpretation, in the sense that it is our version of what the speaker meant, as far as we are able to assess that meaning. The mental model that we build as a representation of a spoken message is a result of our combining the new information in what we just heard with our previous knowledge and experience.

According to Rost (2002), “comprehension is often considered to be the first-order goal of listening, the highest priority of the listener, and sometimes the sole purpose of listening.” Especially for the L2 learners who are acquiring a new language, the term “listening comprehension” typically refers to all aspects of listening since comprehension through listening is considered to be a foundation for enabling learners to process the new language, and since L2 listening (Long & Macian, 1994). However, Rost (2002) firmed that the term “comprehension” needs to be used in a more specific sensen in listening studies. In addition, research has shown that learners behave differently in listening by the purposes of listening to incoming texts (for example, Mills, 1974; Devine, 1982; Rechard, 1983; Ur, 1984; Wolvin and Coakly, 1988, 1993). According to Rost (2002), listening comprehension is an inferential process. Linguistic knowledge and world knowledge interact as listeners create a mental representation of what they hear. Bottom up and top down processes are applied to get to this mental representation and achieve comprehension.

To the nutshell, in order to be successful in listening, we should remember that: “Listening comprehension is not a skill which can be mastered once and for all and then ignored while other skills are developed. There must be

regular practice with increasingly difficult material.”(Rivers Wilga, M.(1986) Teaching Foreign Language Skill, The University of Chicago Press, p. 157)

2.2. *Listening comprehension process*

The listening process can be diagrammed as below in the figure (Field, 2002; Lynch, 2002; Rost, 2002 and Swaffar & Bacon, 1993

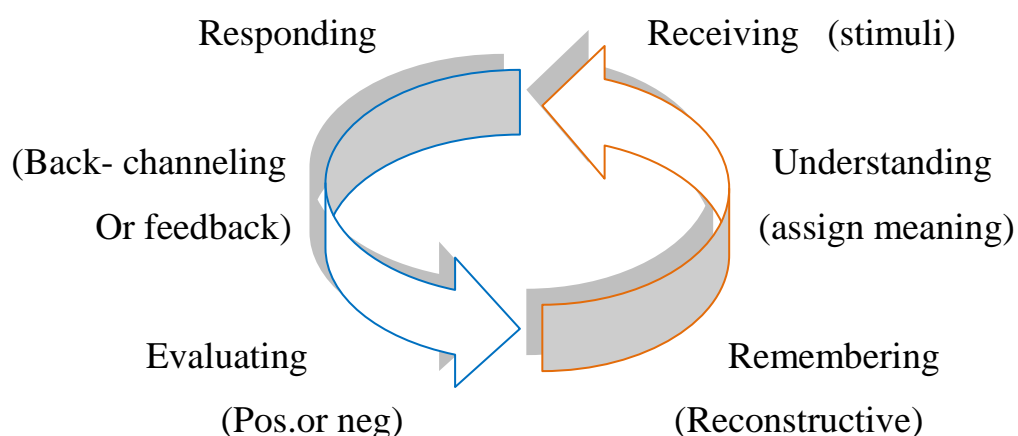


Figure 1: Listening comprehension process

The figure shows that the listening comprehension includes 5 stages: receiving, understanding, remembering, evaluating and responding. The first stage is the perception of sound. The listeners only purely receive and listen to the sound. In another word, it can be called “hearing”. Then, the listeners use their prior knowledge to understand the spoken message and remember. The evaluation happens in their minds and leads to suitable responses. Lesley Barker (2001) has the same idea: “when the listeners can understand, remember, evaluate and give the suitable responses, they are experiencing the listening comprehension process” .Listening, is more than just being able to hear and understand what someone else say, listening skills involve etiquette, asking for clarification, showing empathy and providing an appropriate response.

It is also agreed that the comprehension process is constructed based on the two principal sources of information which Widowson (1983) refers to as systematic or linguistic knowledge and schematic or non-linguistic information. Figure 2 below summarizes the relationship between these information sources:

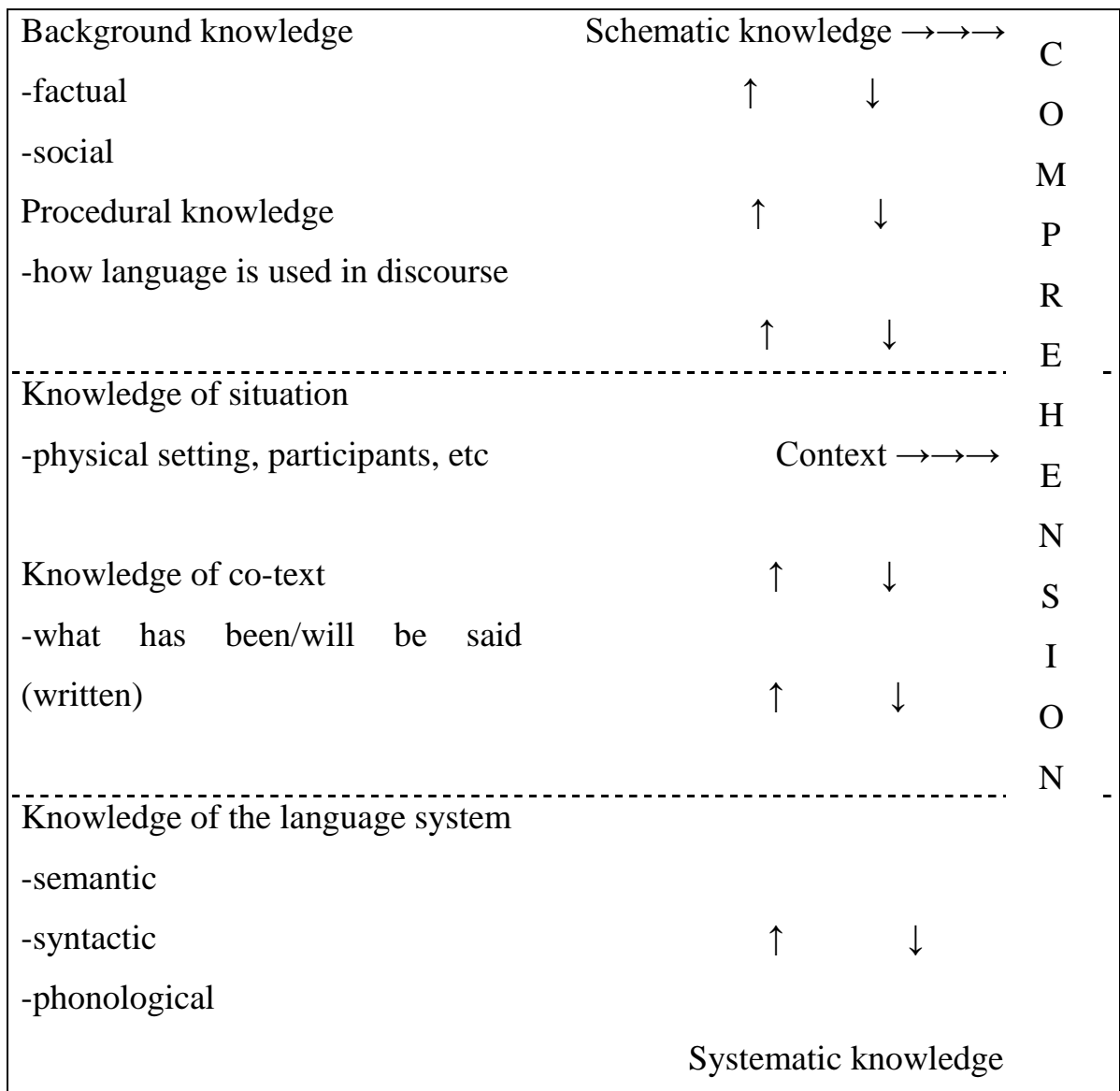


Figure 2: Information sources in listening comprehension
(Anne Anderson & Tony Lynch, 1988, p.13)

Earlier review of research in L2 listening instruction (Lynch, 1988, 2002; Mendelsohn, 1988; Oxford, 1993; Rost, 2002; Rubin, 1994) pay attention to the critical role of both bottom-up and top-down processes in comprehension. Listeners use top - down processes when they use context and prior knowledge (topic, genre, culture, and other schema knowledge in long-term memory) to build a conceptual framework for comprehension. Listeners use bottom-up processes when they construct meaning by accretion, gradually combining increasing larger units of meaning from the phoneme-level up to discourse-level features.

In short, listening comprehension involve two distinct processes (bottom – up listening and top – down listening) and 5 stages (receiving, understanding, remembering, evaluating and responding) with two principal sources of information (linguistic and non-linguistic). These processes interact in form of parallel distributed processing; the degree to which listeners may use one process more than the other will depend on the purpose of listening.

2.3. The stages in listening comprehension

According to Buck, 1994, there are two stages in listening comprehension (1) apprehending linguistic information (text-based: low level) and (2) relating that information to a wider communities context (knowledge-based: high level) and there are two processing models for comprehension: (1) bottom-up and (2) top down. In addition, these studies suggested that listening is achieved through bottom-up processing and it occurs through a number of consecutive stages in a fixed order, starting with the lowest-level of processing and moving up to higher-levels of processing. Bottom up processing starts with the lower-level decoding of the language system evoked by an external source such as incoming information and then moves to interpreting the representation through a working memory of this decoding in relation to higher-level knowledge of context and the world (Morley,

1991). On the contrary, top-down processing explains that listening comprehension is achieved through processing that involves prediction and inference on the basis of hierarchies of facts, propositions and expectations by using an internal source such as prior knowledge (Buck, 1994). This process enables listeners to bypass some specific information and makes researchers consider that listening comprehension is not an unidirectional ability.

Besides, Mary Underwood, 1989 introduced three stages of listening comprehension. They are pre-listening stage, while-listening stage and post-listening stage. According to him, “Pre-listening work can be done in a variety of ways and often occurs quite naturally when listening forms part of an integrated skills course. When planning lessons, time must be allocated for pre-listening activities and these activities should not be rushed”. (Mary Underwood, *Teaching Listening*, Longman 1989, P.31). It is true that learners will find it extremely difficult to do a listening lesson, when they have no idea of what they are going to hear. Even if the sounds or the words which they hear are familiar, they may still be unable to understand because they lack certain kinds of knowledge of the topic, setting or the relationship between the speakers. Thus, the listener’s expectation and purposes should be taken into account. These make listeners feel as in real-life listening situation in their native language. Teachers can help their students to arouse their expectations and see the purpose before a listening lesson. This kind of work is described as “pre-listening activities”. “It would seem a good idea when presenting a listening passage in class to give students some information about the content, situation and speakers before they actually start listening.” (Penny Ur, 1992, P.4)

The While-listening stage involves activities that students are asked to do during the time that they are listening to the text. The purpose of while-listening activities is to help learners develop the skill of eliciting messages

from spoken language. There are also other reasons why students need to listen to the language they are studying. The main thing is that to learn to recognize how it sounds (the pronunciation of words, the stress, the rhythm, the intonation that they can use what they hear as a model for their own speech). When developing the skills of listening for comprehension, while-listening activities must be chosen carefully. They must vary at different levels and in different cases. “Good while-listening activities help learners find their way through the listening text and build upon then expectations raised by pre-listening activities.” (Underwood, Teaching Listening, 1990, P.46).

Post- listening activities are the activities that are done after the listening is completed. Some post-listening activities are extension of the work done at the pre-listening and while-listening stages and some relate only loosely to the listening text itself. The purposes of post-listening activities are: to check whether the learners have understood what they need to or not; to see why some students have missed parts of the message or fail to understand the message; to give the students the opportunity to consider the attitude and the manner of the speakers of the listening text; to expand on the topic or language of the message; and to transfer learned things to another context and to make introduction for the planned work.

3. POTENTIAL DIFFICULTIES IN LISTENING COMPREHENSION

3.1. Listening problems

According to Mary Underwood, Teaching Listening, 1989, the major listening problems include:

* *Lack of control over the speed at which speakers speak*: that means the learners cannot control how quickly the speaker speaks. They feel that the utterances disappear before they can sort them out. “They are so busy working out the meaning of one part of what they hear that they miss the next

part. Or they simply ignore a whole chunk because they fail to sort it all out quickly enough.” One of the reasons for this is that learners cannot keep up with the speed and they often try to understand everything they hear. When they fail in sorting out the meaning of one part, the following will be missed. This can lead to the ignorance of the whole chunk of discourse. Obviously they fail to listen. One method of tackling this is to show students how to identify the important words that they need to listen out for. In English this is shown in an easy-to-spot way by which words in the sentence are stressed (spoken louder and longer). Another is to give them one very easy task that you know they can do even if they do not get 90% of what is being said to build up their confidence, such as identifying the name of a famous person or spotting something that is mentioned many times.

* *The listener's vocabulary*: this is the main problem of the learners in listening comprehension. It is very difficult to understand the spoken texts if we do not know the new words. According to Mary Underwood “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 text part of the speech.” There are four situations relating to the vocabulary that the learners usually committed (1) trying to understand every word. In spite of the fact that we can cope with missing whole chunks of speech having a conversation on a noisy street in our own language, many people do not seem to be able to transfer that skill easily to a second language. One method of tackling this is to show students how to identify the important words that they need to listen out for. In English this is shown in an easy-to-spot way by which words in the sentence are stressed (spoken louder and longer); (2) getting left behind trying to work out what a previous word meant.

All people speaking a foreign language have experienced this problem at one or more than one time. This often happens when you hear a word half

remember and find you have completely lost the thread of what was being said by the time you remember what it means. However, it also can happen with words you are trying to work out that sound similar to something in your language, words you are trying to work out from the context or words you have heard many times before and are trying to guess the meaning of all words. In individual listening you can cut down on this problems with vocabulary pre-teach and by getting students to talk about the same topic first to bring the relevant vocabulary for that topic area nearer the front of their brain.

One training method is that is to use a listening or to get them to concentrate just on guessing words from context. Another is to load up the task even more by adding a logic puzzle or listening and writing task, so that just listening and try to remember words seems like an easier option. Finally, spending time revising vocabulary and doing skills work where they come into contact with it and use it; (3) not knowing the most important words. Therefore, doing the vocabulary pre-teaching before each listening is an effective solution. Nevertheless, these words must actually be guessed from the context. The other solution is simply to build up their vocabulary and teach them how they can do the same in their own time with vocabulary lists, graded readers, monolingual dictionary use, etc; and (4) not recognizing the words that have been known.

The common reasons why students might not recognize the words include not distinguish between different sounds in English, or conversely trying to listen for differences that do not exist. Other reasons are problems with word stress, sentence stress, and sound changes when words are spoken together in natural speech such as weak forms. What all this boils down to is that sometimes pronunciation work is the most important part of listening comprehension skills building.

* *Inability to concentrate:* This can be caused by a number of things but in listening work it is a major problem because even the shortest break in attention can seriously impair the comprehension of the whole process of listening. Whether the topic is interesting or not, students sometimes find tired and unable to concentrate. The outside factors may well make concentration difficult, too. For instance the bad quality machines, poor recording, unfavorable rooms for the use of recorded materials, street or next-door class noise...all of these facts prevent strongly to the concentration of the listeners and as the result, they cannot get full of the message intended.

* *Not being able to catch information repeated:* this type of difficulty connects with what the speakers say or “input” while the listeners are not always in the positions to get the repetition. This is the case when learners join in conversation outside the classroom. Repetition cannot be asked for when listening to the radio or watching television. Even in the classroom, when listening to the lectures, learners cannot frequently order the lecturers to repeat the utterance as many times as they wish. Therefore, the teacher can be solved only when learners are given the opportunity to control their own machines and proceed in whatever way they wish.

* *Problems of interpretation:* These can occur when the speaker and the listener are from the different background and the listener is unfamiliar with the context of speaker’s talk. Students who are unfamiliar with the context may have considerable difficulty in interpreting the words they hear even if they can understand the “surface” meaning. In addition, the meaning of non-verbal clues, facial expression, nods, gestures, tone of voice can easily be misinterpreted by listeners from other cultures. This problem can even occur when the speaker and the hearer are from the same background and use the same language.

* *Established learning habits*: Learning habit is an important factor leading to the success of language learning. If students establish wrong habits, they may fail in their learning, etc.

In different point of view, another linguistics named Goh (2000) stated problems in listening comprehension depended on three stages:

* *In perception stage*: do not recognize words they know, neglect the next part when thinking about meaning, cannot chunk streams of speech, miss the beginning of the text and unable to concentrate.

* *In the parsing stage*: quickly forget what is heard, unable to form a mental representation from these words, and do not understand subsequent parts of input because of earlier problems

* *In the utilization stage*: understand the words but not the intended messages, confused about the key ideas in the messages.

3.2. Language problems

Anne Anderson and Tony Lynch (1988, p.37) point that language problems in listening comprehension encountered by L2 learners created by primarily linguistic knowledge though language system may not always be the principal cause of comprehension difficulty. They explain that one obvious way in which input can be more or less complex is in terms of syntactic structures for ESL learners. It is understandable as learners adopt a target language that possesses certain characteristics of ESL far different from their native one in terms of grammatical structures, lexicon, vocabulary and its mechanism meanwhile listening is most closely related to mechanics which refer to basic sounds of letters syllables, pronunciations of words, intonation and stress.

Other ideas from Scarcella and Oxford (1992): listeners' comprehend spoken messages either through isolated or recognition within the sound stream, phrase or formula recognition, clause or sentence, and extended speech

comprehension. That means ESL students operate simultaneously in one or two of these areas depending on many factors, one of which is proficiency level. For second year students, they only operate on the second or third levels of comprehension so they can hardly operate on the fourth level – understanding discourse.

Nunan (1989) clarifies that the difficulties of language learning usually lie in the difficulty of the materials used as the content for the comprehension activities, and was often borrow from the readability measures for written texts.

With this provision of the reviewed literature including the definition, the process of listening comprehension and its potential difficulties, the researchers hope that these serve as a base in understanding to continue with other chapters related to them.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Introduction

Among the research methods, survey research is one of the most important and useful areas of measurement in applied social research. A “survey” can be anything from a short paper-and-pencil feedback form to an intensive one-on-one in-depth interview. According to Kathleen Bennett DeMarrais, Stephen D. Lapan, survey research can be defined most simply as a means of gathering information, usually through self-report using questionnaire or interview. Johnson (1992) gave the idea that “The purpose of a survey is to learn about characteristic of an entire group of interest (a population) by examining a subset of that group (a sample)”.

The reason for conducting survey includes influencing a selected audience, modifying a service or product and understanding or predicting human behavior. The data of the survey reflects descriptive, behavioral or preferential characteristics of – according to Alreck and Settle (1995) and Rea and Paker (1997). Basing on these advantages of doing survey research, the writer has decided to employ the survey questionnaire as a major technique together with other methods to collect the information for the graduation paper.

In this chapter, the writer describes the setting of the study (students and their background, resources and materials), the subjects, and instruments for collecting the data and the data collection procedure and data analysis, which integrate with the research paper.

2.2. The setting of the study

2.2.1. Students and their background

Most of the 2nd year English majors are between the age of 19 and 21. They have studied English for at least 4 years at high schools (three years at high

school and one year at university) or more. However, at secondary schools and high schools, the students only concentrated on learning about grammar and practicing reading skill, rarely or even never did the students have a chance to practice listening skill. Consequently, it is the big challenge for them in changing learning habits and methods at university.

Besides, it is the fact that English majors at HPU seem not to have language high proficiency because their entrance mark is just 13 or little more for three subjects (Maths, Literature and English) and their listening marks for the two first terms are quite low – just from 5 to 7. So they tend to have higher anxiety in learning and practicing listening skill.

2.2.2. Resources and materials

The textbooks used for the first year are Listen in 1, Listen in 2, Listen in 3, Contemporary topics, Let's listen and teacher – recommended book - Tactics for listening. They are useful and interesting for freshmen in forming their basic listening skill. However, second - year students have no chance to enjoy many listening lessons (only four terms) so to improve listening skill better, learners should actively communicate with their friends and teachers in different periods of English and find listening materials from different sources (on internet, from bookshop and library, etc) to practice listening more at home.

2.3. The subjects

The study was carried out with the participation of 19 second - year English students of the school year 2011 – 2012 and many lecturers of English. These students and teachers are selected randomly to ensure the reliability of the research.

2.4. Instruments for collecting data

While conducting the survey research, the most prevalent data-collection methods are questionnaires, interviews and direct observations of language

use. In addition, many other types of information can be gathered including test results, compositions, or reactions to L2 oral or written-language data.

Two survey questionnaires for both students and teachers were designed and used as the main instrument for collecting data. The questionnaires can range from short 5-8 item instruments to a long document, which requires one or two hours to complete. Items in the questionnaire can be open-ended format or closed, requiring the respondents to select one from among a limited number of responses. The discourse structure of questionnaire is important to consider, as it seems obvious that the respondent must be able to understand the language of the questionnaire.

2.5. Data collection procedure

In the process of conducting the survey research, the researcher must make a series of careful decisions about how the study will be carried out. These include a great deal of steps such as: determining the purpose of the study; stating the research questions; specifying the population and drawing a sample from the population; deciding on the methods of data collection; developing instruments, and training data collectors or interviewers; collecting data; analyzing the data; and addressing non response. Understanding these steps will help researchers assess and construct their own meaning from reports of surveys that they need.

Data gathered from responses of the students in the survey questionnaire were sorted and analyzed statistically to get the answers for the research questions. There are two main kinds of analysis descriptive analyses and co-relational analyses. To the former, the results of the survey are often reported in frequencies and percentages. These descriptive statistics are numbers that summarize the data. Co-relational analyses can be applied along with the descriptive analyses to analyze relationships among variables.

In conclusion, this chapter describes the method using questionnaires to investigate students and teachers so as to answer the research questions raised in the first chapter. Based on the subjects mentioned, prominent findings for the research questions will be realized and presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter, with data collected from the survey questionnaires, a comprehensive analysis will be presented. It is the reorganization of the students' common difficulties when studying listening skill through the data from the questionnaire by the means of pie charts and columns, laid out corresponding to the sequence of the questions and draws out immediately conclusions at each figure.

3.1. Analyzing from the students' survey questionnaire

3.1.1 Years of studying English(Q1)

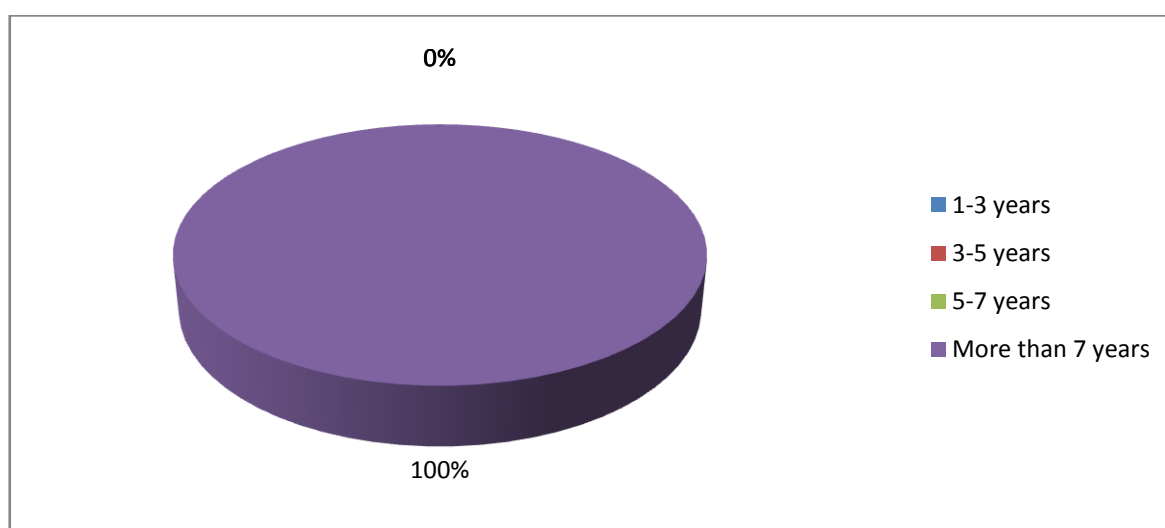


Figure 3: Years of studying English

As can be seen from the pie chart 100% of the students who took part in the study spent more than 7 years studying English. In addition, they got used to English as a second language for a long time. Moreover, all of them have from nine to thirty English periods a week. In comparison with other universities, students of Haiphong Private University had more time exploring English.

3.1.2 Students' attitude toward listening skill (Q2&3)

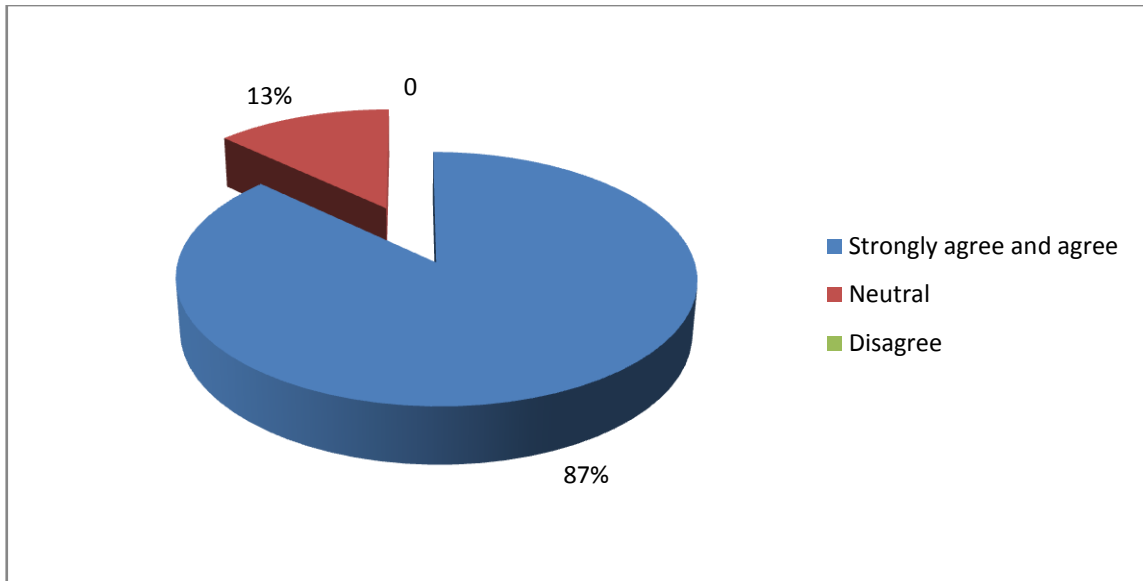


Figure 4: Students' attitude toward listening skill

The pie chart shows most students (87%) considered listening as the most difficult skill among reading, speaking and writing to them. There is only 13% of them do not have any ideas about this question. No one thinks that this skill is easy to master.

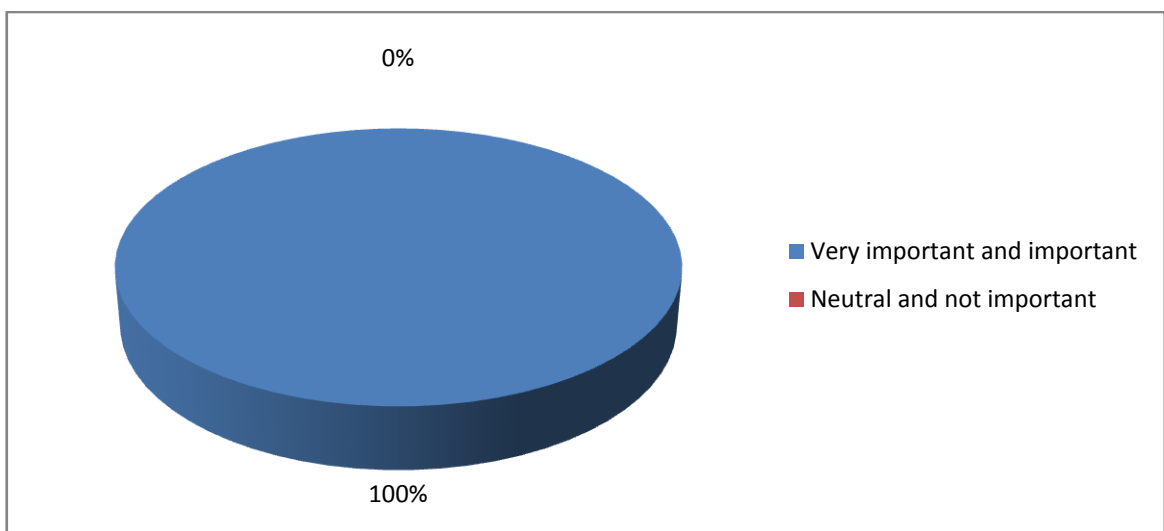


Figure 5: Students' attitude toward how listening is important to them

The above chart illustrates the role of listening approaching from the students' viewpoint, 100% of the students admitted that listening is very important to them. As a result, it can provide much motivation as well as affect rightly to the students in studying listening comprehension.

3.1.3. Students' time allocation for self-study (Q4)

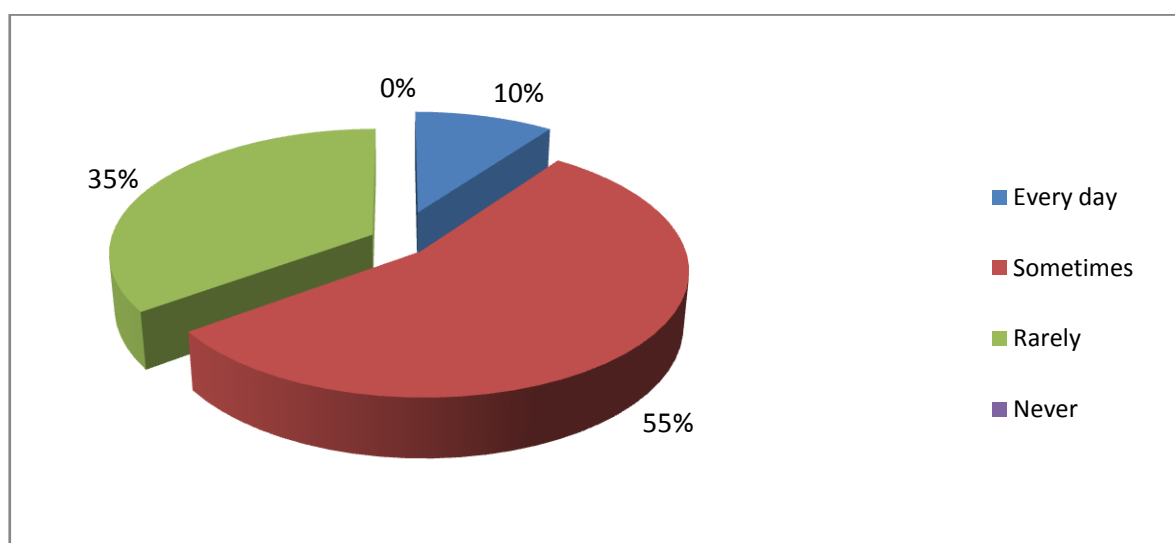


Figure 6: Students' time allocation for self-study.

As can be seen from the chart, up to 90% of the students sometimes or rarely practicing listening skill at home and only 10% of them do it every day as their habits. Students' time allocation for self-study at home is also a problem and it affects the learners very much in mastering the listening skill. "Practice makes perfect". However, it seems to be a disadvantage of HPU 2nd year English majors.

3.1.4. Students' opinion about their self-collected materials exploited(Q7)

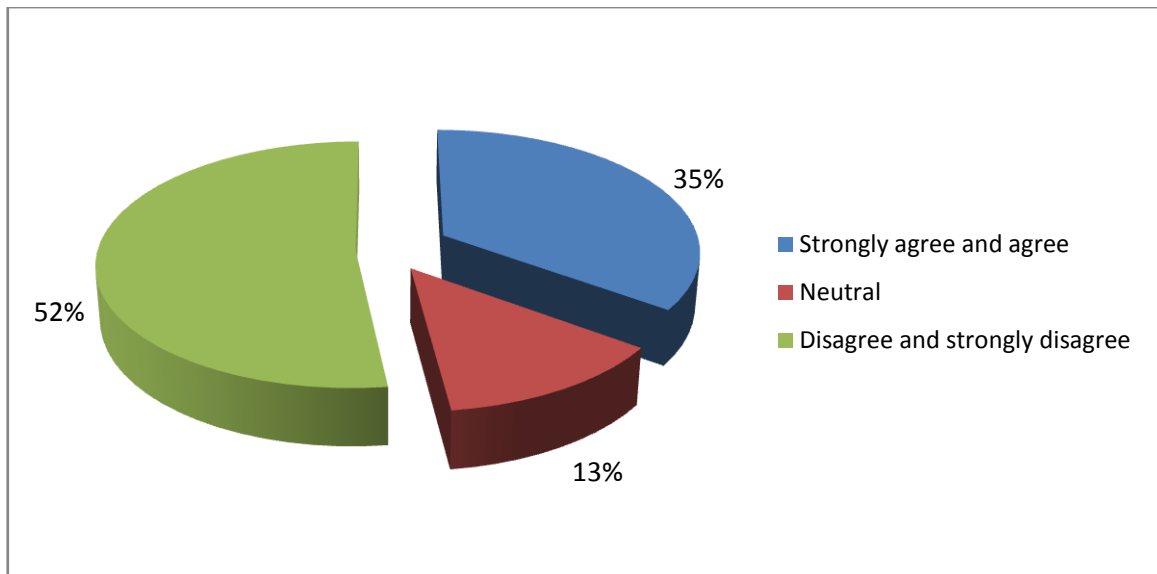


Figure 7: Students' opinion about their self-collected materials exploited

When be asking about their self-collected listening materials exploited interesting and appropriate to their proficient level, the majority of students (52%) confirmed that they (strongly) disagree. Several students (13%) do not know and have ideas about this problem. Only 35% of listeners think they feel interested in listening at home.

To conclude, many students currently are facing the challenges in finding the appropriated materials as well as documents to enhance their listening without the help of professors of teachers. As a result, they cannot self-practice listening at home effectively and encouragingly. It is one of the most challenging issues causing the failure in listening comprehension when students do not have the chance to practice at school any more.

3.1.5 Student's perceptions about their listening difficulties (Q5)

<i>Factors affecting listening</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
a. Your vocabulary is efficient enough to comprehend the spoken texts	0%	27%	13%	47%	13%
b. Grammar helps you much in listening comprehension	13%	13%	20%	47%	7%
c. You have problems with various and unfamiliar accents	27%	47%	26%	0%	0%
d. Stress and intonation make you feel hard to understand the message intended	20%	66%	7%	7%	0%
e. It's difficult for you to understand when native speakers produce spontaneous connected speech	47%	33%	13%	7%	0%
f. The speech rate of native speakers is too fast	13%	26%	61%	0%	0%
g. You feel stressful and nervous while you are listening	13%	40%	27%	7%	13%
h. You have hearing problems	0%	7%	33%	53%	7%
e. Environmental factors prevent you from listening	33%	47%	20%	0%	0%
k. Your social and cultural knowledge is good to comprehend all the spoken messages	27%	33%	20%	20%	0%

Table 1: Students' perceptions about their listening difficulties

Based on the literature review, the writer designed the survey questionnaire into 2 main factors affecting listening: linguistic and non-linguistic factors. To the first, the writer would like to analyze the factors relating to the linguistic field.

As can be seen from the table almost of the students (47%) are not confident with their vocabulary. 40% of them think that their vocabulary is good enough to help them in listening. It can be said that they have obstacles in listening comprehension because of lacking vocabulary but it is not a very big and major problem. The chart also points out that grammar is not the problem of 2nd English majors in listening comprehension because most of the students (47%) think that their grammar cannot help them much to understand the spoken language. Only 26% of the learners seem to depend on the grammar in mastering this skill.

Besides, almost all of students (74%) find difficult to understand the spoken message because of various and unfamiliar accents. Therefore, varying accents become one of the difficulties that English majors encounter in listening comprehension. In addition, stress and intonation is a big challenge as well. 86% of the students admitted that they feel hard to understand the message intended because of this phonological factor (stress and intonation). One more phonological factor affects to students' listening competence is the connected speech. The majority of students (80%) feel it is difficult for them to understand when the native speakers produce spontaneous connected speech. Speech rate of native speakers seems is not a very big problem to the learners. Only 39% of students think it is too fast to them to catch the spoken text while 61% have no ideas about this question. Maybe they feel the speech rate is not affected them much in understanding the texts.

To the non-linguistic field, it can be shown from the data collected that the majority of students (53%) get stressful and nervous when they are listening to English. This psychology is a big problem of 2nd year English majors to listen well. Moreover, the chart indicates that 80% of the students become hesitant and unable to concentrate on listening by the environmental factors such as the noise, poor physical condition or unpleasant atmosphere... during listening process. Furthermore, most of the students (60%) think their social and cultural knowledge is good enough to listen. This factor together with hearing problems seem not the major challenges to the students when only 7% of them complained for hearing problem and 20% of them are not confident with their understanding about culture and society.

3.1.6 Student's opinions on the materials supplied by the teachers (Q6)

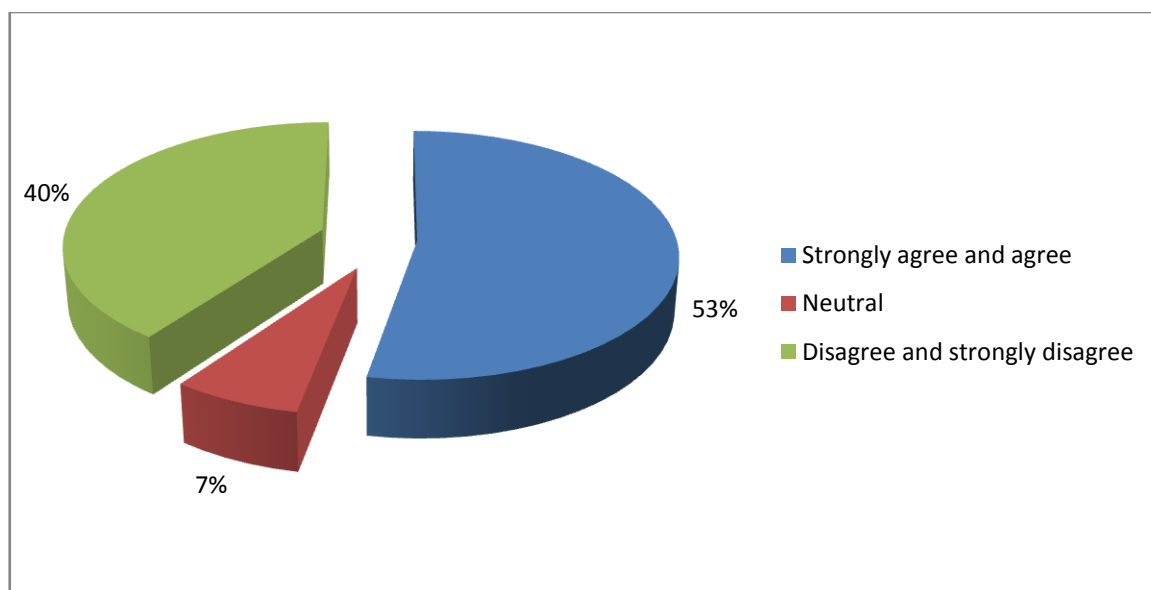


Figure 8: Students opinions on the materials supplied by the teachers.

The above chart shows that many students (53%) find the materials supplied by their lecturers are useful, interesting and suitable. Accordingly, these materials bring positive effects on learners' listening. However, not small amounts of students (40%) still find the materials unsatisfied and unsuitable for them to

improve their listening competence. It is easy to understand because the ability of each student is not stimulus. Therefore, it could be better if the listening teachers can supply them more extra authentic listening materials.

To the open question: “In your opinion, what your teachers should do to help you improve your listening acquisition? Or do you have any useful tips to share the learners?” There is no respond to this question. They seem to face lots of difficulties in listening comprehension but they ignore or maybe do not know how to overcome these barriers. They do not have any acquirement to their teachers or any useful tips to share the classmates.

3.2. Analyzing from the teachers’ survey questionnaire

3.2.1. Teachers’ opinions on students’ competence during their first two years in the university.

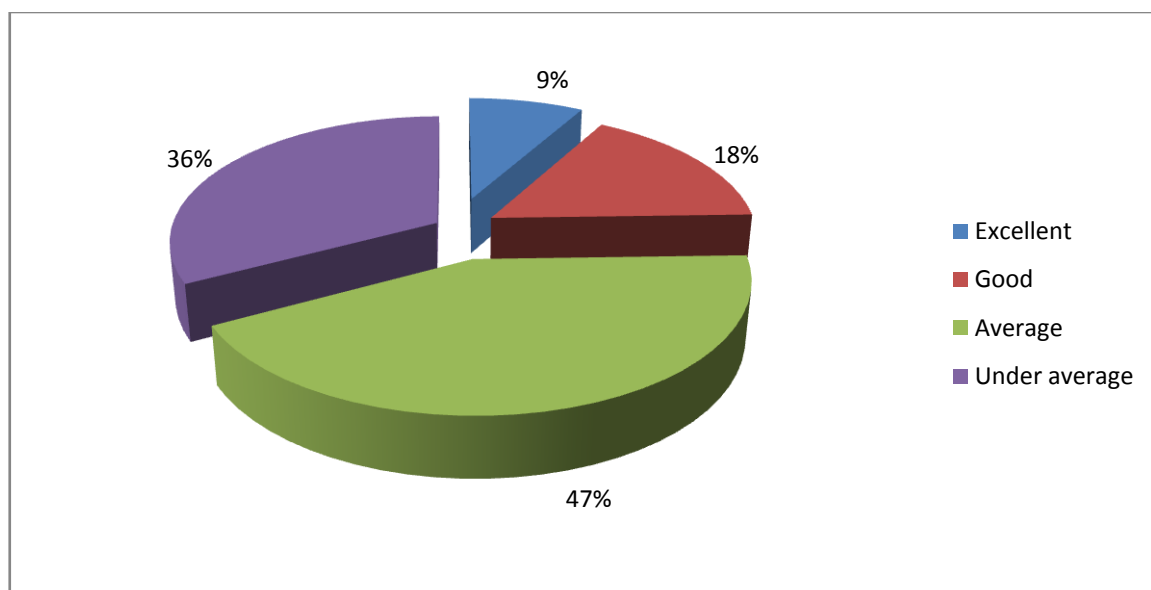


Figure 9: Teachers’ opinion on students’ listening competence

As it can be seen from the chart, nearly half of the teaching staffs in the Faculty of Foreign Languages think that their students’ listening competence during their first two years is at average level. Moreover, a large percentage of students (36%) are under average. Only 9% of them agree that the listening

ability of the students is excellent. It can be concluded that in the beginning school-years students' biggest challenge is listening comprehension.

3.2.2 Teachers' opinions on students' common difficulties in listening lessons

Factors affecting listening	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Your students' vocabulary is efficient enough to comprehend the spoken texts.	18%	28%	36%	18%	0%
Grammar helps them much in listening comprehension	18%	55%	18%	9%	0%
They have problems with various and unfamiliar accents	36%	36%	18%	9%	0%
Stress and intonation make them feel hard to understand the message intended	9%	46%	36%	9%	0%
It's difficult for them to understand when native speakers produce spontaneous connected speech	46%	36%	18%	0%	0%
The speed rate of native speakers is too fast to your students	0%	82%	9%	9%	0%
They feel stressful and nervous while listening	9%	45%	46%	0%	0%
They have hearing problems	9%	36%	18%	36%	0%
Environmental factors prevent them from listening	9%	36%	46%	9%	0%
Their social and cultural knowledge is good to comprehend all the spoken messages	9%	46%	36%	9%	0%

Table 2: Teachers' opinions on students' common difficulties in listening lessons

As can be seen from the table almost of the teachers (46%) think that their students' vocabulary is efficient enough to comprehend the spoken texts. This recommendation is nearly correspondent with the figure found in the student's survey questionnaire. Almost teachers and students consider the students' vocabulary is good and efficient enough. In the contradiction with the students, most of teachers (73%) think that grammar helps the students much in listening comprehension while only 26% of their students agree with this statement. Besides, a large number of lecturers (72%) think that their students face the difficulty with various accents. Therefore, varying accents become one of the difficulties that English majors encounter in listening comprehension.

Next, stress and intonation is a big challenge as well. 54% of the teaching staffs admitted that they feel stress and intonation cause students obstacles to understand the message intended. One more phonological factor affects to students' listening competence is the connected speech, according to the teachers. We can figure out the same percentage in viewpoints of teachers and students in this question. While the majority of students (80%) feel it is difficult for them to understand when the native speakers produce spontaneous connected speech, 82% teachers support this point of view as well. Differently to the students, 82% teachers confirm that the speed rate of native speakers is too fast to their students.

To the non-linguistic field, it can be shown from the data collected that the majority of teachers (54%) also think that the learners get stressful and nervous when they are listening to English. This psychology is a big problem of 2nd year English majors to listen well. Moreover, the chart indicates that 44% of the teachers affirm that their students often be hesitant and unable to concentrate on listening by the environmental factors such as the noise, poor physical condition or unpleasant atmosphere... during listening process. In

addition, majority of the lecturers (54%) think their social and cultural knowledge is good enough to listen. This factor together with hearing problems seem are not the major challenges to the students when only 9% of the teachers complain for hearing problem and the same percentage of them think the students are not good at culture and society of English speaking countries.

3.2.3 Teachers' opinions on the materials supplying to the students(Q3)

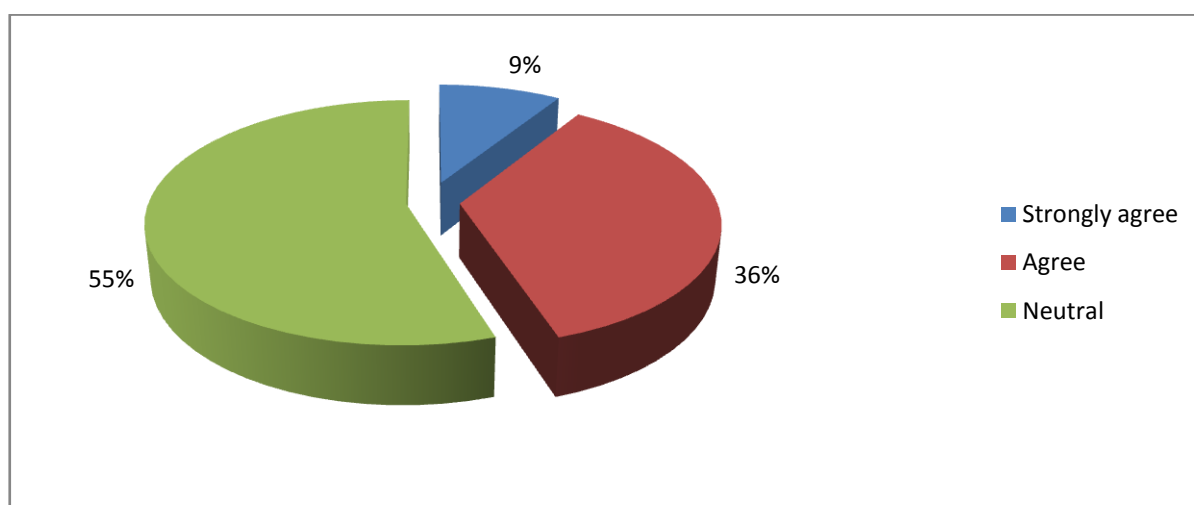


Figure 10: Teachers' opinions on materials applying to the 2nd year English majors

As it can be seen from the pie chart, 45% of the teachers think that the materials using for 2nd year English majors currently are interesting and appropriate. 55% of them do not have any ideas. Not like 40% of the students, all the teachers consider the textbooks for teaching listening are suitable and interesting to the learners' proficiency level.

3.2.4 Teachers' opinions on the ways to help students improve their listening skill

To this question, many methods have been introduced with the hope of helping students overcoming their difficulties in listening acquisition. There are some of the most outstanding ones: giving students more authentic listening materials; listening more to various accents and from different sources;

listening to English through some songs; providing extra listening materials; teaching pronunciation and culture to help students listen better; spending much time for speaking and listening; using games and activities motivating students to listen; practicing makes perfect, etc.

3.2.5 Teachers' suggestions to the students to enhance their listening competence.

Here are some tips that the lecturers have been given out to help students enhance their listening ability by themselves: having English environment everywhere; more practicing because of “practice makes perfect”; self-study with sources and materials from authentic websites on the Internet.

Overall, the third chapter has presented the data, which obtained from the survey questionnaire. The analysis of the data is carefully done. In the next chapter, findings will be discussed in details and recommendations will be given.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS, DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Findings and discussions

In listening comprehension process, most of the 2nd year English majors encounter various kinds of difficulties that refer to many aspects of spoken English. They are both linguistic factors and non-linguistic factors.

Regarding linguistic factors, there are five main obstacles that students at HPU have been facing. Firstly, most of the students (60%) have difficulty in listening comprehension because of *limited vocabulary*. It is a really big problem because according to Mary Underwood “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 text part of the speech.” Secondly, it is *difficult for students to recognize words from sounds heard in connected speech*. It is easy to understand this since spoken English is characterized by the features of connected speech such as weak forms, contractions, elision, assimilation and connotation, which are totally different to Vietnamese language.

Thirdly, students *have poor knowledge of stress and intonation* while stress and intonation play important roles in perception. According to Anderson and Tony Lynch (1988:37), stress and intonation are great sources of listening problems of EFL learners. Fourthly, students are *not familiar with various accents*. Listening to the different accents from different people is a hard job. Once one gets accustomed to the way the speaker say, he or she may face problems of failure in recognizing sound and signals if he or she changes to listen to another one with different manner of making an utterance. Lastly, it is *fast speech rate* that 82 % of teachers agree that their students lack control

over the speed at which the speakers speak. Therefore, they may not get messages from the speechmakers because they are so busy working out the meaning of one part of what they hear, then they miss the next part.

Non-linguistic difficulties in listening comprehension involve three aspects including psychology, environment and general knowledge. The first obstacle is *stress and nervousness in students' psychology*. In the researchers' opinion, linguistic factors are the reasons for learners' feelings. For example, when one hears a listening text, mostly because of lacking linguistic knowledge like word meaning, pronunciation, etc, he cannot understand the intended message. As a result, their listening comprehension fail in just step two of 5 steps in listening process and so listening skill becomes a difficult skill as the viewpoints of 53% of students and 54% of teachers.

The second obstacle is from *unfavorable environment* with poor physical condition, unpleasant atmosphere and noise in which noise is the most interfering factor. The last obstacle is *lack of social and cultural knowledge*. 60% of students think that their general knowledge is not good enough or too poor to listen well. This poses big challenge for students because background knowledge is always the first essential factor for understanding any spoken language.

From the findings and discussions above, the researchers see that 2nd year English majors at HPU face various difficulties (both in linguistics and non-linguistics). The next part is going to suggest some solutions with the hope of giving some suitable ways to help learners to overcome these obstacles.

4.2. Recommendations

The previous part shows that the second year students of English in HPU have in countered a great deal of difficulties in learning to listen in English. Hence, This chapter suggests some ways to minimize the students' difficulties in listening acquisition.

- **Recommendation for the students**

- * Improving vocabulary and pronunciation*

There are some following ways to improve vocabulary and pronunciation:

- Learn words in topic so that students can remember words more easily because they are in the logical system.
- Do variety of vocabulary exercises regularly
- Read stories, novels, newspapers or magazines in English
- Actively participate in environments where there is much word usage, use the new words in the real life
- Use body well to learn English.
- Listen to authentic spoken texts and repeat word or sentence heard with right stress and intonation.

- * Controlling the speakers' speed and get familiar with various accents*

Students should search and find out the listening materials from different sources from the Internet, televisions, radios, websites, etc and listen to varying voices of speakers. So that they can get familiar with their different voices, pronunciation and accents.

Here are some authentic, useful and interesting spoken texts, tapes, CDs and websites that the writer wants to introduce to the readers:

Listen for it (Jack C Richards, Deborah Gordon, Andrew Harper)

Basics tactics for listening (Jack C. Richards, 1996)

Let's talk 1 (Leo Jones, 2002)

Listen to me (Barbara H. Holey)

Three or Tree (Anne Baker, 1982)

English Pronunciation in use (Mark Hancock)

Websites retrieved from:

- www.npr.org
- [movies/t. v. w/no subtitles](#)
- <http://www.voanews.com>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk>
- <http://edition.cnn.com/video>
- <http://www.eslhome.com/esl/listen/>
- <http://www.EnglishListening.com/>
- <http://www.thedailyshow.com>
- <http://www.history.com/videos>
- <http://www.eslfast.com>

Besides, the learners should:

- Speak to native English and teachers and try to imitate their pronunciation
- Practice listening everyday to have sensitivity to connected speech
- Make conversations with friends in English and have peer correction
- Listen and try to memorize lyrics and rhythm of English songs
- Watch news, movies, etc on TV

*** *Broadening social and cultural knowledge***

Without having enough knowledge of society and culture in listening, students will face problems of interpretation in “understanding” step. Thus, it is necessary to widen this kind of knowledge in some ways. The suggestions are searching information on internet, watching TV and listening to radio regularly, asking and learning from the professional people, learning from books, newspapers, magazines, from friends and from real life.

Especially, talking to the foreigners is really a good way to improve the social as well as cultural knowledge. Students not only can hear the speakers’ voice but also can know more about the countries through the real people. It is interesting if the students can go abroad or go traveling. Because “Traveling widens your knowledge”.

*** *Creating good learning environment***

Learning environment for listening skill, which is listening laboratory besides cassettes tapes, tape recorders and written listening texts, is a vital key affecting the quality of both learning and teaching listening skill. However, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the findings of this study shows that the students are not satisfied with the recent learning environment. Students suppose that the listening classes still so noisy. Consequently, the students find hard and challenging to concentrate while listening. It is therefore, essential to upgrade the recent laboratory so that all of students have good chance to study listening skill in such a motivating environment for improving their listening skill.

To create good learning environment, students should:

- Find a quiet place to listen in order to concentrate better during listening comprehension process.
- Have good physical condition for learning: good radio, comfortable chair, etc.
- Make friendly and pleasant atmosphere

*** *Building confidence in listening***

As mentioned above, linguistic factors are the main reasons for students' nervousness and stress during listening process so it is necessary to build students' confidence with the first way - dealing with linguistic problems. The students should study; have good knowledge about the phonetics and phonology, pronunciation, grammar, etc. Try to apply, practice and get used to using them in the real life.

The second is preparing relevant knowledge carefully before listening. Make sure that, before listening to the speakers (whether on tape or "live"), you understand very clearly, what you are expected to do, carry out the planned activities confident that you are doing the right thing. Make sure that each time a listening text is heard, even for the second or third, or fourth time you have a specific purpose for listening

The third is having ambiguity tolerance. Do not worry if you do not understand every word. It is very important that you learn to accept that a listening task can often be completed even when you miss some of the words and thus begin to appreciate that comprehension can occur with less than complete understanding of all that is said.

The fourth, in the examinations, instead of worrying and looking forward to the tape, just take time to look through the transcript, in advance.

- **Recommendation for the teachers**

- ❖ ***Materials should be authentic***

Authentic material allows the students to hear a much more real act of communication with all the interactional features which are normally not found in scripted materials. It gives them a true representation of real spontaneous

speech with its hesitations, false starts and “mistakes”, which will make them more able to cope with “real life” speech when they meet outside the learning situation. If the students have the opportunity to listen to a range of authentic texts, they will sample many different voices with varying accents, both social and regional. They will hear people expressing things in a variety of ways; for example, they may hear anger being expressed by shouting or by choice of words or by many interruptions.

Students need to experience as wide a selection of listening texts as possible. Teachers should not wait until their students become advanced learners to begin using authentic materials, although at first texts will have to be selected carefully and tasks kept simple, so that students are not demotivated by being confronted with texts and activities, which they cannot handle. Use of authentic materials, such as work place training videos, audio tapes of actual workplace exchanges, and TV and radio broadcasts, increases transferability to listening outside of the ESL classroom context- to work and to community.

❖ ***Materials should be combined with various accents***

Listening materials should be combined from different sources to ensure that they are interesting and appropriate enough for all levels of the students. Not only in the topics but also varied in speed and accents of the speakers, so that learners can get familiar with different voices, speed, accents, and there will be the better improvement in their listening comprehension.

❖ ***Developing both top-down and bottom-up processing skills***

As mentioned above, top-down oriented activities encourage the learners to discuss what they already know about the topic. So that they will carry out the planned activities confident that, they are doing the right thing and they will succeed with whatever listening tasks they are asked to do. Moreover, bottom-up practice activities give confidence in accurate hearing and comprehension

of the components of the language (sound, words, intonation, grammatical structures).

PART 3: CONCLUSION

1. Overview of the study

Being one of HPU 2nd year English majors, from facing a lot of difficulties in listening comprehension, together with the deep awareness about the importance of listening; the researchers decided to carry out the study with the hope of finding some obstacles that students experience in listening comprehension as well as suggesting some solutions to improve their listening skill.

The study includes three main parts. Part I is the introduction of the research. It introduces to the readers the basic information why this thesis is fulfilled, how it is conducted and what is conducted for. Part II is the development of the thesis including four chapters. The first chapter provide readers an overview of the theoretical background on which this study bases on. They include the definition of listening, listening comprehension, potential difficulties in listening comprehension, etc. The next chapter introduces the method applied in the thesis. It is an action research with the definitions and processes. Techniques employed in this minor thesis such as data collection and data analysis can be found here. Basing on the literature, two survey questionnaires were designed for 2nd year majors and teachers of Faculty of Foreign Languages and using quantitative method to analyze the data, findings were found and represented in the chapter three.

Accordingly, students' eight obstacles in listening comprehension are *lacking vocabulary, failing in recognizing words in connected speech, having poor*

knowledge of stress and intonation, being not familiar with various accents, listening to fast speech rate, possessing stress and nervousness, learning in unfavorable environment, and lacking general knowledge. The last chapter is the discussion and recommendations for the obstacles found above to help learners to overcome these difficulties. There are both suggestion for students and teachers consisting of *improving vocabulary and pronunciation, control the speakers' speed and get familiar with various accents, broadening social and cultural knowledge, creating good learning environment, building confidence in listening, materials should be authentic, combined with various accents and using both top-down and bottom-up processing skills.* The last part is the summary of the previous parts and chapters. It is also the part the concluding marks are drawn out and pedagogical implications and suggestions for further researches are presented

2. Limitations and suggestions for further study

In any research papers, limitations are unavoidable. The study presented is of no exception.

Firstly, the difficulties found out in the study is just from second – year English majors at HPU so there should be further studies on different subjects.

Secondly, the techniques and activities suggested through prove to be useful and effective, they are likely to be subjective and incomplete. There should be some more techniques and activities to help second English majors of HPU in particular and English major students in general make good advance in listening skill.

Thirdly, listening is only one of the four basic skills in teaching and learning English. However, there has been a few of studies on improving these skills.

Therefore, it is important that studies on reading, speaking and writing for better English teaching and learning should be carried out.

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APPENDIX

STUDENTS'SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is designed for the study on some obstacles facing HPU 2nd year English majors in listening comprehension. Your assistance in completing the survey is highly appreciated. All the provided information is solely for the aims of the study, not for any other purposes. Please write down the answer or tick in the box!

Thank you very much for your cooperation!

1. How long have you learnt English?

- 1-3 years
- 3-5 years
- 5-7 years
- More than 7 years

2. Among four skills: reading, speaking, writing and listening, Listening skill is the most difficult one for you?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

3. How is listening skill important for you?

- Very important
- Important
- Neutral

Not very important

Not important at all

4. How often do you practice listening at home?

A. Every day, whenever I am free, it's my habit.

B. Sometimes when I remember and like to listen.

C. Rarely, only when I need to finish my homework.

D. Never. I hate listening to English. It makes me have a headache.

E. Other ideas:

5. Check your own answer

<i>Factors affecting listening</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
Your vocabulary is efficient enough to comprehend the spoken texts					
Grammar helps you much in listening comprehension					
You have problems with various and unfamiliar accents					
Stress and intonation make you feel hard to understand the message intended					
It's difficult for you to understand when native speakers produce spontaneous connected speech					
The speech rate of native speakers is too fast					
You feel stressful and nervous while you are listening					
You have hearing problems					

Environmental factors (noise, physical condition, unpleasant atmosphere...) prevent you from listening					
Your social and cultural knowledge is good to comprehend all the spoken messages					

Others (Please specify):

.....

6. The listening materials supplied by the teachers are interesting and appropriate to you?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

7. The self-collected materials exploited in your listening are interesting and appropriate to your proficiency level.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

8. In your opinion, what your teachers should do to help you improve your listening acquisition? Alternatively, do you have any useful tips to share the learners?

.....

-The end-

Thank you once again!

APPENDIX

TEACHERS' SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is designed for the study on some obstacles facing HPU 2nd year English majors in listening comprehension. Your assistance in completing the survey is highly appreciated. Your answers play a very important and useful part to the study. All the provided information is solely for the aims of studying, not for any other purposes. Please write down the answer or tick in the box!

Thank you very much for your cooperation!

1. What do you rate your students' listening competence during their first 2 years in the university?

- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- Under average

2. Please give your own ideas for these recommendations

<i>Factors affecting listening</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
Your students' vocabulary is efficient enough to comprehend the spoken texts					
Grammar helps them much in listening comprehension					
They have problems with various and unfamiliar accents					

<i>Factors affecting listening</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
Stress and intonation make them feel hard to understand the message intended					
It's difficult for them to understand when native speakers produce spontaneous connected speech					
The speech rate of native speakers is too fast to your students					
They feel stressful and nervous while listening					
They have hearing problems					
Environmental factors (noise, physical condition, unpleasant atmosphere...) prevent them from listening					
Their social and cultural knowledge is good to comprehend all the spoken messages					

Others (Please specify):

.....

.....

3. Do you think that listening materials applying to the 2nd year English majors is interesting and appropriate?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

4. In your opinion, what should you do to help the students improve their listening?

.....
.....

5. Do you have any tips or suggestions to your students to enhance their listening competence?

.....
.....

- The end -

Thank you once again!

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