BỘ GIÁO DỤC VÀ ĐÀO TẠO

TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC QUẢN LÝ VÀ CÔNG NGHỆ HẢI PHÒNG

KHÓA LUẬN TỐT NGHIỆP

NGÀNH : NGÔN NGỮ ANH

Sinh viên : Nguyễn Văn Cường

HẢI PHÒNG - 2025

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TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC QUẢN LÝ VÀ CÔNG NGHỆ HẢI PHÒNG

A STUDY ON THE DIFFICULTIES IN LISTENING COMPREHENSION OF 1ST-YEAR ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS AT HPU

KHÓA LUẬN TỐT NGHIỆP ĐẠI HỌC HỆ CHÍNH QUY
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Giảng viên hướng dẫn: ThS. Nguyễn Thị Quỳnh Hoa

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Tên đề tài: A study on the difficulties in listening comprehension of 1st-year English major students at HPU

NHIỆM VỤ ĐỀ TÀI

1. **Nội dung và các yêu cầu cần giải quyết trong nhiệm vụ đề tài tốt nghiệp**

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CÁN BỘ HƯỚNG DẪN ĐỀ TÀI TỐT NGHIỆP

Họ và tên : Nguyễn Thị Quỳnh Hoa

Học hàm, học vị : Thạc Sĩ Ngôn Ngữ Anh

Cơ quan công tác : Trường Đại học Quản lý và Công nghệ Hải Phòng

Nội dung hướng dẫn : A study on the difficulties in listening comprehension of 1st-year English major students at HPU.

Đề tài tốt nghiệp được giao ngày   tháng   năm 2025

Yêu cầu phải hoàn thành xong trước ngày   tháng   năm 2025

Đã nhận nhiệm vụ ĐTTN   Đã giao nhiệm vụ ĐTTN

  Sinh viên   *Giảng viên hướng dẫn*

Nguyễn Văn Cường   ThS. Nguyễn Thị Quỳnh Hoa

Hải Phòng, ngày   tháng   năm 2025

XÁC NHẬN CỦA KHOA

CỘNG HÒA XÃ HỘI CHỦ NGHĨA VIỆT NAM

Độc lập - Tự do - Hạnh phúc

PHIẾU NHẬN XÉT CỦA GIẢNG VIÊN HƯỚNG DẪN TỐT NGHIỆP

Họ và tên giảng viên: Nguyễn Thị Quỳnh Hoa

Đơn vị công tác: Trường Đại Học Quản lý và Công nghệ Hải Phòng

Họ và tên sinh viên: Nguyễn Văn Cường

Chuyên ngành: Ngôn ngữ Anh

Nội dung hướng dẫn: A study on the difficulties in listening comprehension of

1st-year English major students at HPU

1. Tinh thần thái độ của sinh viên trong quá trình làm đề tài tốt nghiệp

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2. Đánh giá chất lượng của đồ án/khóa luận (so với nội dung yêu cầu đã đề ra trong nhiệm vụ Đ.T. T.N trên các mặt lý luận, thực tiễn, tính toán số liệu…)

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3. Ý kiến của giảng viên hướng dẫn tốt nghiệp

Được bảo vệ ☐   Không được bảo vệ ☐   Điểm hướng dẫn ☐

Hải Phòng, ngày ... tháng ... năm ......

Giảng viên hướng dẫn

PHIẾU NHẬN XÉT CỦA GIẢNG VIÊN CHẤM PHẢN BIỆN

Họ và tên giảng viên: ....

Đơn vị công tác: Trường Đại học Quản lý và Công nghệ Hải Phòng

Họ và tên sinh viên: Nguyễn Văn Cường

                        Chuyên ngành: Ngôn ngữ Anh

Đề tài tốt nghiệp: A study on the difficulties in listening comprehension of

                        1st-year English major students at HPU

1. Phần nhận xét của giáo viên chấm phản biện

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2. Những mặt còn hạn chế

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3. Ý kiến của giảng viên chấm phản biện

Được bảo vệ [   ]   Không được bảo vệ [   ]   Điểm hướng dẫn [   ]

Hải Phòng, ngày ... tháng ... năm ......

Giảng viên chấm phản biện

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ABSTRACT

A study on the difficulties in listening comprehension of 1st-year English major students at HPU. This research aims to identify common listening comprehension difficulties and propose practical solutions to enhance the listening ability of first-year English majors at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology. Listening is one of the most essential skills in language learning, alongside speaking, reading, and writing. It plays a key role not only in classroom learning but also in daily communication, academic success, and future career opportunities. Through listening, learners can absorb information more effectively, develop pronunciation and vocabulary, and improve their interaction in real-life contexts. However, many students struggle with various challenges such as unfamiliar accents, fast speech, limited vocabulary, and listening anxiety. By collecting data through questionnaires, interviews, and listening tests, this study explores the underlying causes of these difficulties. It also provides recommendations for students to improve their listening skills through self-practice, and for teachers to enhance teaching methods and integrate listening-focused activities into the curriculum. Listening comprehension is not only important for academic purposes but also for promoting intercultural communication and global understanding. Therefore, investing in the development of this skill is essential for students in a globalized world.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

In the era of globalization, English has emerged as an essential tool for international communication, serving as a bridge that connects people across countries, cultures, and professions. As English increasingly dominates fields such as education, business, and technology, mastering the language has become a crucial goal for students in non-native English-speaking countries, including Vietnam. Among the four core language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—listening comprehension is often considered the most fundamental yet also the most challenging to acquire. Listening is not merely a passive activity but an active process involving attention, interpretation, and response. It is typically the first skill developed by language learners in both their native and foreign languages. According to Vandergrift (2007), listening plays a pivotal role in language acquisition and lays the foundation for the development of other language skills. However, in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), especially in environments where exposure to authentic English is limited, listening becomes a significant barrier to effective communication and academic success.

In Vietnam, English has been a mandatory subject in the education system for several years. Despite various initiatives by the Ministry of Education and Training to enhance English instruction, many students still demonstrate low proficiency levels, particularly in listening comprehension. Research has shown

that Vietnamese learners face considerable challenges in listening due to several factors, such as limited access to authentic audio materials, a lack of effective listening strategies, inadequate pronunciation training, and insufficient classroom practice (Nguyen & Trinh, 2018; Hoang, 2020). First-year English major students at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology (HPUMT) are no exception. As they transition from high school to university, these students encounter a more demanding academic environment. Although many possess basic English knowledge, they often struggle to comprehend spoken English, especially when it involves fast speech, diverse accents, idiomatic expressions, or complex sentence structures. Furthermore, the strong emphasis on grammar and reading during high school may not have adequately prepared them for the listening requirements of university-level English.

Given the crucial role of listening in academic achievement, particularly in understanding lectures, participating in discussions, and engaging with multimedia content, it becomes necessary to investigate the specific challenges that HPUMT students face. Understanding these challenges is essential for designing effective instructional interventions and providing appropriate support to help students succeed in their language learning journey.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Although recent educational reforms have placed more emphasis on listening in English curricula, particularly at the university level, a noticeable gap persists between classroom instruction and the real-world listening demands encountered

by students. Many first-year English majors at HPUMT continue to face significant difficulties in understanding spoken English, whether in academic settings, casual conversations, or multimedia resources. These difficulties are influenced by a range of factors. Linguistic barriers, such as limited vocabulary, unfamiliar accents, and a lack of phonological awareness, can impede comprehension. Psychological elements, including anxiety, low confidence, and lack of motivation, may further complicate the learning process. Contextual issues, such as limited exposure to authentic listening inputs, poorly structured classroom activities, and time constraints in teaching, also contribute to the problem.

Despite the prevalence of these challenges, there has been limited research focusing specifically on the listening difficulties faced by first-year English major students at HPUMT. Without in-depth understanding, educators may struggle to provide effective instruction, and students may lose motivation, which could negatively affect their academic performance and communicative abilities. Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by examining the common listening difficulties encountered by students, exploring their underlying causes, and proposing practical, evidence-based solutions informed by both student and teacher perspectives.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this research is to explore the listening comprehension difficulties of first-year English major students at HPUMT. It aims to identify the specific challenges these students face, analyze the linguistic, psychological, and

contextual causes behind these issues, and investigate the strategies students currently use when approaching listening tasks. In addition, the study seeks to gather insights from teachers about their students' difficulties and the teaching methods they employ in the classroom. Based on the findings, the research intends to propose practical and evidence-informed recommendations to enhance students' listening comprehension skills.

1.4. Research Questions

To achieve the objectives of the study, the research will be guided by several questions. First, it seeks to uncover what common listening difficulties are experienced by first-year English major students at HPUMT. Second, it aims to understand the possible causes of these challenges, considering linguistic, psychological, and contextual aspects. Third, it explores the strategies currently used by students and teachers to address listening problems. Finally, the study aims to propose pedagogical recommendations that can effectively improve students' listening comprehension abilities.

1.5. Scope of the Study

The study is confined to first-year English major students at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology. This group is at a crucial stage in their language development, shifting from general English education in high school to more specialized academic English at university. The study focuses specifically on listening comprehension, particularly the students' ability to understand spoken English in various contexts, including classroom exercises, multimedia materials,

and everyday conversations. It does not investigate other language skills such as reading, writing, or speaking unless they directly relate to listening. Data will be collected through questionnaires and interviews with both students and English instructors. While the findings may not be generalizable to all Vietnamese learners or other universities, they will offer valuable insights that can guide instructional improvements within the HPUMT context.

1.6. Significance of the Study

This research holds both practical and theoretical significance. For students, it will help raise awareness of their own listening challenges and introduce effective strategies to overcome them, potentially enhancing their motivation and autonomy in learning English. For teachers, the study will provide a clearer understanding of the problems their students face, enabling them to adapt their teaching approaches and improve classroom activities. For curriculum developers and university administrators, the research findings can inform the design of more effective listening courses and learning materials that incorporate authentic input and strategy-based instruction. Finally, for future researchers, this study serves as a foundation for further investigation into listening comprehension difficulties in Vietnamese EFL contexts, particularly among university students.

By addressing both the theoretical and practical dimensions of listening challenges, the study aims to contribute meaningfully to the improvement of English language education at HPUMT and potentially at other similar institutions.

1.7. Organization of the Study

This thesis is structured into five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the study by outlining its background, identifying the research problem, setting objectives, formulating research questions, defining the scope, and discussing the significance. Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive review of the relevant literature, presents the theoretical framework, and identifies gaps in previous research. Chapter 3 details the research methodology, including the design, participants, data collection tools, and methods of analysis. Chapter 4 presents and discusses the research findings, analyzing the data in light of the research questions and existing literature. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes the study by summarizing the key findings, offering pedagogical implications, and suggesting directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Overview

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of literature related to listening comprehension, laying the theoretical and conceptual groundwork for the study. It discusses the nature and significance of listening, its types and underlying processes, and the numerous factors that influence learners' listening ability. The chapter also explores previous research findings to shed light on the difficulties commonly encountered by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners and the strategies used to overcome them. This review provides an essential context for the development of the research methodology and the interpretation of findings in the following chapters.

2.2. Definition of Listening Comprehension

Listening comprehension is broadly defined as the ability to accurately receive and interpret messages in the communication process. According to Rost (2011), listening is not merely the passive act of hearing but rather an active process that requires attention, interpretation, and mental reconstruction of the speaker's message. Brown (2001) emphasizes that listening involves both perceptive (hearing sounds) and cognitive (interpreting meaning) dimensions, making it one of the most complex language skills to master. Anderson (1995) explains that effective listening entails three overlapping stages: perceptual processing (decoding sounds), parsing (linking linguistic units with meaning), and utilization (integrating new information with prior knowledge).

Furthermore, listening comprehension in a second or foreign language is especially demanding due to the fleeting nature of spoken input, the presence of unknown vocabulary or unfamiliar accents, and the lack of visual support (Buck, 2001). Unlike reading, which allows the learner to revisit the text, listening demands immediate processing, which intensifies the cognitive load. Consequently, understanding listening as a multi-layered and active skill is essential for designing effective language learning strategies.

2.3. The Importance of Listening in Language Learning

Listening is a foundational skill in both first and second language acquisition. It serves as the primary means of receiving language input, which is crucial for linguistic development. As highlighted by Krashen (1985) in his Input Hypothesis, language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to comprehensible input— that is, input that is slightly above their current proficiency level (i+1). Listening serves as a key channel through which such input is delivered, especially in EFL contexts where opportunities for face-to-face interaction with native speakers are limited.

Moreover, listening competence strongly correlates with the development of other language skills. Vandergrift and Goh (2012) argue that without the ability to comprehend spoken language, learners are unlikely to produce accurate and meaningful speech. In communicative language teaching (CLT), listening is not only a prerequisite for effective conversation but also an essential component in building fluency and vocabulary. Nation and Newton (2009) further support this

view, stating that listening provides a rich source of linguistic exposure that aids in developing implicit knowledge of grammar, pronunciation, and discourse structures.

2.4. Types of Listening

Listening is a multifaceted skill that varies depending on the communicative purpose and context. Morley (1991) and other scholars have identified several types of listening, including intensive, extensive, interactive, and academic listening. Intensive listening typically occurs in classroom settings and involves close attention to short texts to analyze specific linguistic features such as pronunciation, grammatical structures, or intonation patterns. In contrast, extensive listening involves engaging with longer audio materials—such as podcasts, movies, or narratives—for general comprehension or enjoyment, aiming to enhance listening fluency and expose learners to authentic language use. Interactive listening is characterized by its real-time nature, such as in conversations or discussions, where listeners must not only comprehend incoming information but also respond appropriately, making it essential for developing communicative competence. Lastly, academic listening refers to listening activities in academic contexts, such as understanding lectures or seminars, which demand the ability to follow logical reasoning, identify key ideas, and often take notes simultaneously. Each type of listening places different cognitive and linguistic demands on learners, and a comprehensive listening curriculum should

address all these variations to equip students with a wide range of comprehension skills.

2.5. Processes in Listening Comprehension

Listening comprehension is fundamentally a cognitive process that involves both **bottom-up** and **top-down** processing. Field (2008) explains that **bottom-up processing** refers to decoding the acoustic signal starting from phonemes to words, then phrases, and ultimately meaning. This approach is essential for recognizing vocabulary and grammatical structures, especially in unfamiliar content.

In contrast, **top-down processing** relies on the listener's prior knowledge, contextual understanding, and expectations to interpret the message. When listeners can activate relevant schema—such as knowledge of a topic or cultural background—they are better able to predict and infer meaning from incomplete or unclear audio input.

Skilled listeners integrate both processes flexibly. They may use bottom-up strategies to catch unknown words while relying on top-down processing to interpret the broader message. As Goh (2000) argues, unsuccessful listeners often fail to coordinate these processes, leading to frequent comprehension breakdowns. Teaching learners how to balance both is, therefore, key to improving listening proficiency.

2.6. Factors Affecting Listening Comprehension

Listening comprehension is affected by a wide range of factors that can be categorized into linguistic, cognitive, psychological, and contextual domains. Linguistic challenges include limited vocabulary, unfamiliar grammatical structures, and difficulty decoding connected or reduced forms of speech—features that are prevalent in natural spoken English. Learners often struggle to recognize idiomatic expressions or contractions, which may hinder their ability to grasp the overall meaning of a passage. From a cognitive perspective, listening requires significant mental processing in real time, placing pressure on working memory. According to Anderson (1995), when the cognitive load exceeds the listener's processing capacity, comprehension deteriorates. Psychological factors such as listening anxiety, lack of confidence, and poor concentration also negatively impact performance, as nervous learners may become overly focused on their fear of failure instead of the content itself (Graham, 2006). Contextual and situational variables—such as the speaker's accent, the speed and clarity of the audio, background noise, and the degree of familiarity with the topic—further influence comprehension outcomes. For example, audio recordings with unfamiliar accents or no visual support may be particularly challenging for learners in EFL contexts. Understanding these interrelated factors is essential for developing targeted strategies to enhance students' listening performance in the foreign language classroom.

2.7. Listening Comprehension Difficulties for EFL Learners

In EFL contexts like Vietnam, learners often struggle with listening due to insufficient exposure to authentic spoken English. Research by Goh (2000) revealed that learners in Singapore frequently experienced comprehension breakdowns when they failed to recognize key vocabulary. Graham (2006) noted that many students tried to understand every word and became overwhelmed by the pace of native speakers. Field (2008) highlighted that learners had trouble recognizing reduced or colloquial forms of speech. Vietnamese learners, as reported by Nguyen and Tran (2018), often face difficulties related to listening anxiety, limited practice, and unfamiliar accents. These studies suggest that both linguistic and psychological readiness, as well as access to authentic materials, are critical for improving listening comprehension.

2.8. Strategies for Improving Listening Comprehension

Effective listening instruction involves teaching learners how to apply cognitive and metacognitive strategies before, during, and after listening tasks. Vandergrift (2007) recommends a structured approach beginning with pre-listening activities such as predicting content and reviewing key vocabulary. During the listening phase, learners should focus on extracting general meaning or specific details and take notes as needed. Post-listening tasks might involve summarizing the content, discussing answers, or reflecting on what was understood and what caused confusion. Encouraging learners to engage in extensive listening outside the classroom through resources like YouTube videos, English podcasts, and films

can help develop their listening fluency and expose them to diverse accents and speaking styles.

2.9. Previous Studies on Listening Difficulties

Numerous studies have examined the challenges learners face when trying to comprehend spoken English. Hasan (2000) found that Arab students were often hindered by fast speech, unfamiliar pronunciation, and inadequate vocabulary. Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) stressed the importance of teaching both the form and meaning of input to enhance comprehension. Hamouda (2013), studying Saudi learners, identified lack of concentration and motivation as significant issues. Similarly, Tran (2021) focused on Vietnamese university students and concluded that the absence of authentic listening materials in the classroom hindered their progress. These findings are consistent with the experiences of first-year English majors at HPUMT, thereby reinforcing the relevance of this research.

2.10. Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by two main theoretical frameworks: Information Processing Theory and Krashen's Input Hypothesis. Information Processing Theory focuses on how learners perceive, store, and retrieve auditory input, emphasizing that a limited working memory and high cognitive load can negatively affect listening comprehension. Krashen's Input Hypothesis highlights the role of comprehensible input, suggesting that learners benefit most from exposure to language that is just slightly beyond their current level of understanding. Together,

these theories provide a solid foundation for analyzing the cognitive and linguistic challenges that students face when engaging in listening activities.

2.11. Summary

In summary, this chapter has provided a detailed examination of listening comprehension from multiple angles, including its definition, importance, types, and the cognitive processes involved. It has explored the various factors that influence listening performance and reviewed existing literature on common difficulties and strategies used by EFL learners. The theoretical frameworks underpinning this study were also introduced to offer a comprehensive lens through which the data will be analyzed. These insights form the backbone of the research and help to justify the focus on listening comprehension difficulties among first-year English major students at HPUMT.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Overview

This chapter presents the methodological framework of the current study, which aims to investigate the listening comprehension difficulties experienced by first-year English major students at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology (HPUMT). A carefully structured methodology is crucial to ensure the validity, reliability, and transparency of the research process. The chapter explains the research design, participant selection, instruments for data collection, procedures followed during the research, methods of data analysis, ethical considerations, and recognized limitations. Each of these components plays a critical role in ensuring that the study is methodologically sound and that its findings are meaningful and applicable.

3.2. Research Design

The study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This design was selected to offer a comprehensive perspective on the research problem by combining numerical data with in-depth qualitative insights. Quantitative data was collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to a broad sample of students, enabling the identification of common listening comprehension difficulties and their perceived severity. Qualitative data, in turn, was gathered through semi-structured interviews with a smaller group of students and lecturers to provide a more detailed understanding of personal experiences, contextual influences, and

emotional responses associated with listening comprehension. The integration of both methods ensured triangulation, which enhances the study's credibility by allowing findings from different data sources to validate one another. Given the multifaceted nature of language learning, this design is particularly well-suited for capturing both measurable patterns and the nuanced experiences of learners.

3.3. Participants

Participants were chosen to reflect the characteristics of the target population—first-year English major students at HPUMT. A convenience sampling strategy was applied, allowing the researcher to access students who were available and willing to take part in the study during the data collection period. The study involved a total of 80 students who completed the questionnaire, drawn from an approximate population of 120 students enrolled in the English language program during the 2024–2025 academic year. In addition to the survey participants, five students and two English lecturers were selected for interviews based on their questionnaire responses and their willingness to participate further. To ensure relevance and consistency across participants, the study required that all student participants be officially enrolled in the first-year English program, have completed at least one semester of listening instruction, and voluntarily agree to participate. By selecting individuals with similar academic backgrounds and exposure to English listening classes, the study aimed to control extraneous variables and obtain data that accurately reflects the realities faced by this specific group of learners.

3.4. Instruments for Data Collection

To collect data, the researcher used two primary instruments: a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide. The questionnaire was designed based on previous studies and adapted to the local context. It was piloted with a small group of students to ensure clarity and validity before being administered on a larger scale. The final version was divided into three main sections. The first section gathered demographic information, including participants' age, gender, years of English study, and self-assessed listening proficiency. The second section explored specific types of listening difficulties students experienced, such as fast speech, unknown vocabulary, and unfamiliar accents. The third section used a Likert scale to measure the frequency and severity of these problems. The questionnaire was written in English but included Vietnamese translations for complex terms to avoid confusion. Meanwhile, the interview component allowed participants to express their thoughts in greater depth. Interview questions were grouped thematically in alignment with the questionnaire content but were phrased in a conversational tone to encourage natural dialogue. Each interview aimed to uncover students' personal experiences, emotional reactions, and coping strategies, as well as to explore lecturers' observations and recommendations regarding classroom challenges. Interviews were conducted in Vietnamese to ensure participant comfort and were later translated into English for analysis.

3.5. Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process was conducted over a three-week period and followed a clear and ethical procedure. Initially, the researcher prepared the instruments and secured permission from course instructors to visit classrooms for data collection. The questionnaire was then distributed to students during regular English class sessions, with each student given approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete it under supervision. After the questionnaire data was reviewed, students who exhibited interesting response patterns or reported notable difficulties were invited to participate in follow-up interviews. Two lecturers who were experienced in teaching listening skills also agreed to be interviewed. The interviews took place in private, quiet rooms at the university to ensure minimal distractions and were audio-recorded with participants' consent. All data, including completed questionnaires and interview recordings, were carefully organized and stored securely. Questionnaire responses were digitized and compiled into spreadsheets, while interview data was transcribed, anonymized, and prepared for qualitative analysis.

3.6. Data Analysis

Data analysis involved both quantitative and qualitative methods, appropriate for the mixed-methods design of the study. For the quantitative component, descriptive statistics were used to identify the frequency and severity of various listening comprehension problems. Frequencies and percentages helped determine how widespread each issue was, while means and standard deviations

offered insight into which problems students perceived as most severe. These results will be visually represented through tables, bar graphs, and pie charts in the next chapter. Depending on time and resources, inferential statistical tests such as t-tests or ANOVA may be conducted to determine whether significant differences exist based on gender, years of English study, or self-assessed proficiency. For the qualitative component, interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic coding following Braun and Clarke's six-phase approach. This involved becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, identifying and reviewing themes, and finally interpreting and reporting the results. Common themes included emotional barriers to listening, linguistic overload, challenges related to classroom conditions, and the strategies students use to improve their listening skills. Participant quotations will be included to illustrate these themes and provide rich, contextual understanding.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the research process to ensure participants' rights and privacy were protected. All participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Informed consent was obtained before participation, and all responses were treated with confidentiality. Personal information was not disclosed, and pseudonyms or numerical codes were used in the analysis and reporting phases. Interview recordings and transcripts were stored securely, and only the researcher and academic supervisor had access to them. Additionally,

care was taken to ensure that all communication and questions were culturally appropriate and respectful of participants' comfort and dignity.

3.8. Limitations of the Study

Despite careful planning and implementation, the study faces several limitations. First, the sample was limited to one university, meaning that findings may not be generalizable to other educational institutions or contexts in Vietnam. Second, the study relied on self-reported data, which may be affected by participants' personal biases or lack of self-awareness. Third, although interviews were conducted in Vietnamese to ease communication, some nuances may have been lost or altered during the translation into English. Lastly, time constraints limited the scope and depth of data collection, particularly in the qualitative phase, where a broader range of participants or longer interviews might have revealed additional insights. Nonetheless, these limitations do not diminish the overall value of the findings, which contribute meaningfully to understanding listening comprehension challenges among English majors in Vietnam.

3.9. Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodological foundation of the study, highlighting the rationale behind the mixed-methods design and the steps taken to ensure valid and ethical data collection. It described the process of participant selection, the instruments used for gathering data, the procedures for analysis, and the measures taken to protect participants' rights. While acknowledging the study's limitations,

this chapter establishes a strong basis for the presentation and interpretation of results in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Overview

This chapter presents and interprets the findings gathered from questionnaires and interviews with first-year English major students and lecturers at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology (HPUMT). The analysis is organized in alignment with the research questions and incorporates both quantitative data obtained from 65 student responses and qualitative insights drawn from semi-structured interviews. These findings are contextualized using the theoretical frameworks discussed in Chapter 2, particularly Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Anderson's Information Processing Theory, and listening comprehension models developed by Field (2008), Goh (2000), and Vandergrift (2007).

4.2. Participants' Demographic Information

Among the 65 students who participated in the study, the majority were female, accounting for 84.6%, while male students made up 15.4%. In terms of English learning experience, 63.1% of students had studied English for more than seven years, 30.8% had five to seven years of experience, and 6.1% had studied for less than five years. Regarding self-assessed listening proficiency, 60% of the students rated their listening skills as moderate, 23.1% considered themselves weak, and only 16.9% perceived their skills as good. When asked about their listening practice outside the classroom, 50.8% reported occasional practice, 35.4% said they rarely practiced, and only 13.8% practiced regularly. These statistics suggest that although most students have had extensive exposure to English instruction,

their real-world listening practice remains limited, potentially contributing to their difficulties in comprehension.

Table 4.1: Demographic Profile of Student Participants

Category	Group	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	84.6
	Male	15.4
Years of English Study	Over 7 years	63.1
	5–7 years	30.8
	Less than 5 years	6.1
Listening Proficiency	Moderate	60.0
	Weak	23.1
	Good	16.9
Listening Practice Frequency	Occasionally	50.8
	Rarely	35.4
	Regularly	13.8

4.3. Main Difficulties in Listening Comprehension

Students identified several major obstacles in listening comprehension. The most common challenge was dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary. According to the data, 72.3% of students agreed or strongly agreed that unknown words hindered their understanding of spoken English. One student commented during the interview that although they could follow the grammar, they often became confused when encountering new vocabulary, losing track of the sentence's meaning. This difficulty aligns with Field's (2008) concept of bottom-up processing, where decoding unfamiliar lexical items impairs comprehension.

The issue of understanding different accents and pronunciation patterns also emerged prominently. Approximately 66.2% of students reported having trouble with this aspect. Interviewees highlighted that while they were familiar with the standardized textbook audio, real-life speech, especially from native speakers, posed significant difficulties. This observation supports Goh's (2000) conclusion that limited exposure to diverse accent types restricts listening performance.

The most severe difficulty reported was fast speech. As many as 83.1% of students indicated that rapid speech made it hard to keep up with the listening material. This finding can be interpreted through Anderson's Information Processing Theory, which explains that learners experience cognitive overload when they cannot process incoming information quickly enough.

Mental translation and issues with concentration also posed considerable challenges. Around 60% of students confessed to frequently translating English

into Vietnamese while listening. One participant shared that when they failed to understand a sentence, they panicked and attempted to translate it word by word, often resulting in confusion. This reflects weak metacognitive control and a lack of strategic listening skills, as discussed in Vandergrift's (2007) model. Additionally, 58.5% of students struggled to comprehend topics when they lacked background knowledge, showing difficulty in utilizing top-down processing strategies effectively.

Table 4.2: Students' Reported Listening Difficulties

Difficulty Category	Percentage (%)
Fast speech	83.1
Unfamiliar vocabulary	72.3
Accents and pronunciation	66.2
Mental translation	60.0
Limited background knowledge	58.5

4.4. Frequency and Severity of Difficulties

To evaluate the perceived severity of listening challenges, students were asked to rate each on a Likert scale from 1 to 5. The results indicated that fast speech and unfamiliar vocabulary were perceived as the most severe, with average scores of 4.34 and 4.25 respectively. Accents and pronunciation received an average rating

of 4.02, followed by lack of concentration at 3.80 and limited background knowledge at 3.71.

Table 4.3: Average Severity Ratings of Listening Difficulties

Listening Difficulty	Average Rating (1–5)
Fast speech	4.34
Unfamiliar vocabulary	4.25
Accents and pronunciation	4.02
Lack of concentration	3.80
Limited background knowledge	3.71

4.5. Students' Listening Habits and Exposure

Despite their years of formal education, most students reported limited exposure to authentic listening experiences. Only 27.7% stated that they listened to English for more than 30 minutes per day. The most commonly used resources were English songs, cited by 84.6% of students, followed by English movies (73.8%) and listening applications (41.5%). These figures support Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis, which emphasizes the need for frequent and meaningful language input for successful acquisition.

Table 4.4: Students' Listening Practice and Sources

Listening Source	Usage (%)
English songs	84.6
English movies	73.8
Listening apps	41.5
>30 minutes daily usage	27.7

4.6. Strategies Used by Students

The study also explored strategies employed by students to aid their listening comprehension. Many students reported basic methods such as replaying audio tracks, watching movies with English subtitles, and studying key vocabulary in advance. Notably, 64.6% of students indicated frequent reliance on English subtitles when watching films. One interviewee remarked that while they initially depended on subtitles, they gradually began focusing more on listening. However, more complex metacognitive strategies, such as prediction, planning, and self-monitoring, were rarely used, suggesting an area for pedagogical development.

4.7. Teachers' Observations and Perspectives

Interviews with lecturers revealed additional insights. Teachers observed that students lacked independent learning habits and tended to focus on test preparation rather than practical communication. They also noted that classroom

listening materials were often overly controlled and failed to reflect natural spoken English. One lecturer emphasized the need for more exposure to authentic listening contexts, pointing out that textbook audio does not adequately represent real-life language use.

4.8. Discussion

The collected data highlight a range of interconnected factors that contribute to listening comprehension difficulties among English majors at HPUMT. Linguistically, limited vocabulary knowledge, unfamiliar accents, and fast speech emerged as major barriers. Cognitively, many students struggle with processing overload and employ ineffective strategies such as constant mental translation. Psychologically, factors like anxiety and lack of focus further impede comprehension. Contextually, insufficient exposure to authentic listening situations and outdated materials exacerbate these problems. These findings align with key second language acquisition theories, reinforcing the importance of meaningful input, strategic listening instruction, and curriculum reform. While students exhibit some degree of motivation and awareness, their approach to listening remains at a surface level, and teacher feedback underscores the need for more realistic and student-centered teaching approaches.

4.9. Summary

This chapter has examined the main listening difficulties faced by first-year English majors at HPUMT by analyzing both statistical survey data and qualitative interview insights. The results suggest that learner-internal factors such

as limited vocabulary and strategic weaknesses, combined with external instructional shortcomings, jointly contribute to comprehension challenges. These insights provide the foundation for the recommendations and pedagogical solutions presented in the final chapter.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusion

This study was conducted to explore the difficulties that first-year English major students at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology face in listening comprehension. Using a mixed-methods approach that combined questionnaire responses and semi-structured interviews with students and lecturers, the research uncovered a variety of interconnected challenges affecting learners' listening abilities.

One of the most significant findings was the impact of fast speech rate. Many students found it hard to keep pace with native or fluent speakers, especially in cases where the speech lacked pauses or clear intonation cues. This aligns with the principles of Information Processing Theory, which suggests that the speed of incoming information may overwhelm the learner's processing capacity, leading to superficial understanding or missed details. Another major difficulty was the presence of unfamiliar vocabulary and idiomatic expressions, which hindered the students' ability to apply bottom-up decoding strategies effectively. Without adequate lexical knowledge, learners struggled to identify key words and understand meaning in context. Moreover, pronunciation differences and accent variations—particularly those from unfamiliar native-speaker varieties such as British, Australian, or regional accents—also emerged as notable barriers. These findings resonate with previous research that highlights the importance of diverse speech model exposure in listening instruction.

Cognitive and affective factors further contributed to listening problems. Students frequently admitted to relying on mental translation into their first language, which slowed down their processing and affected overall comprehension. Issues like anxiety, lack of focus, and overdependence on translation were commonly reported. Additionally, limited background knowledge made it difficult for learners to employ top-down strategies, such as predicting content, interpreting speaker intent, or inferring meaning when parts of the message were missed. These individual challenges were compounded by broader contextual issues. Students' exposure to English listening outside the classroom was minimal, with many only listening to English for less than 30 minutes per day, often with subtitles or transcripts. This limited the development of real-time processing skills.

From the lecturers' perspective, the problems were consistent with students' reports. They emphasized that the current curriculum, which prioritizes grammar and vocabulary due to exam requirements, often neglects listening skills. Institutional constraints also limit the availability of diverse or authentic listening materials. Furthermore, there was a noticeable lack of instruction in metacognitive strategies—such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating listening—which are vital for successful listening comprehension, as demonstrated in Vandergrift's (2004) metacognitive model.

In conclusion, this research revealed that listening comprehension difficulties stem from a complex combination of linguistic, cognitive, emotional, and pedagogical factors. These findings support major theoretical frameworks

discussed in Chapter 2, including Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which highlights the importance of comprehensible input; Information Processing Theory, which underscores the need for a manageable cognitive load; and Vandergrift's model, which emphasizes strategic listening behavior. Therefore, addressing these challenges requires both pedagogical reform and a shift in how listening is taught, practiced, and assessed within English language education.

5.2. Implications

The study's results carry several implications for language educators, curriculum developers, and learners. First, teachers should focus more on exposing students to fast and natural speech in order to develop their decoding skills. Techniques such as dictation, shadowing, and gap-fill exercises using authentic audio materials can train learners to handle real-time input more efficiently. In addition, strategy instruction must become an integral part of listening lessons. Learners should be taught how to plan for listening by previewing content, monitor their understanding during listening, and evaluate their performance afterwards. These metacognitive skills are essential for developing autonomous and effective listeners.

Moreover, teachers should incorporate a wide range of authentic and varied listening materials, including podcasts, interviews, and news reports from different English-speaking regions. This would help students become familiar with diverse accents, informal expressions, and spontaneous speech. To enhance comprehension further, teachers should activate students' background knowledge

through pre-listening activities such as discussing topics, brainstorming, or reviewing key vocabulary. Encouraging learners to listen to English daily, both inside and outside the classroom, is also essential. Students should be guided to use accessible resources like YouTube, TED Talks, audiobooks, or language learning apps. Creating structured self-study routines and maintaining listening journals can foster greater learner autonomy and sustained practice.

5.3. Recommendations

In light of the study's findings, several recommendations can be proposed. For students, it is crucial to engage in regular listening practice, aiming for at least 30 minutes per day. This practice should balance both passive exposure and active engagement, such as focusing on the overall message before analyzing specific details. Students should also aim to use unscripted and subtitle-free materials to simulate real-world listening conditions. Keeping a listening journal may help them reflect on their experiences, monitor vocabulary development, and recognize recurring difficulties.

For teachers, it is important to diversify listening content beyond what textbooks offer. Authentic materials should be regularly incorporated into lessons to expose learners to a broader range of language use. Teachers should provide explicit instruction on listening strategies, including how to make predictions, take notes, draw inferences, and evaluate understanding. They should also promote interactive listening tasks, such as pair work, group discussions, or projects that

involve listening components. Assessment methods should be reoriented to include reflective activities or portfolios, not just standardized tests.

For curriculum designers and administrators, allocating more classroom time to listening instruction is essential. One possible approach is to develop a dedicated listening course or module. Institutions should also support co-curricular activities like English clubs, listening workshops, or "English-only" zones to increase real-life exposure. In addition, it is advisable to redesign listening assessments to reflect authentic tasks—such as summarizing podcast episodes or responding to audiovisual content—so that students are prepared for actual communication scenarios.

5.4. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

Despite the valuable insights this study has generated, several limitations should be acknowledged. Firstly, the research was limited to students from a single institution, which may restrict the generalizability of its findings. Future studies should involve participants from multiple universities across different regions in Vietnam to gain a broader perspective. Secondly, much of the data was based on self-reporting, which can be affected by memory bias or personal perceptions. Future research should incorporate more objective methods, such as classroom observations or diagnostic testing, to validate results. Thirdly, this study captured only a snapshot of student difficulties within a short time frame. Longitudinal research is encouraged to track learners' progress over time and assess the long-term impact of interventions, such as strategy training or increased exposure to

English. Finally, there is a growing need for studies on the role of technology in listening development. Future researchers could explore how mobile apps, AI-powered tools, or gamified platforms influence learner motivation and performance in listening.

5.5. Final Thoughts

Listening has long been regarded as one of the most overlooked skills in language education. Although it plays a critical role in both academic success and everyday communication, it often receives less instructional attention than other language skills. The present study highlights that many Vietnamese university students still enter higher education with underdeveloped listening abilities. This situation is primarily the result of limited exposure to English, inadequate strategy training, and a learning environment heavily influenced by exams.

Nevertheless, listening is not an innate ability; it is a skill that can be taught and improved through effective instruction and regular practice. With the appropriate use of materials, targeted strategy instruction, and sustained learner engagement, many of the obstacles to listening comprehension can be overcome. It is vital for educators and institutions alike to reframe listening as an active, strategic process that deserves focused attention in the language classroom. By adopting the recommendations outlined in this study, English programs can better equip learners to become confident, autonomous, and competent listeners who are ready to thrive in academic, professional, and global contexts.

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