

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



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KHÓA LUẬN TỐT NGHIỆP

NGÀNH: NGÔN NGỮ ANH

Sinh viên : Bùi Thị Thu Hương

Giảng viên hướng dẫn: Ths. Nguyễn Thị Huyền

HẢI PHÒNG - 2018

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

**DIFFICULTIES OF LEARNING LISTENING
COMPREHENSION FACED BY FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS OF
FOREIGN LANGUAGES DEPARTMENT AT HAI PHONG
UNIVERSITY**

KHÓA LUẬN TỐT NGHIỆP ĐẠI HỌC HỆ CHÍNH QUY

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NHIỆM VỤ ĐỀ TÀI TỐT NGHIỆP

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Tên đề tài: Difficulties of learning listening comprehension faced by first-year students of Foreign Languages Department at Hai Phong university

NHIỆM VỤ ĐỀ TÀI

1. Nội dung và các yêu cầu cần giải quyết trong nhiệm vụ đề tài tốt nghiệp (về lý luận, thực tiễn, các số liệu cần tính toán và các bản vẽ).

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2. Các số liệu cần thiết để thiết kế, tính toán.

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3. Địa điểm thực tập tốt nghiệp.

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CÁN BỘ HƯỚNG DẪN ĐỀ TÀI TỐT NGHIỆP

Người hướng dẫn thứ nhất:

Họ và tên:.....

Học hàm, học vị:.....

Cơ quan công tác:.....

Nội dung hướng dẫn:.....

Người hướng dẫn thứ hai:

Họ và tên:.....

Học hàm, học vị:.....

Cơ quan công tác:.....

Nội dung hướng dẫn:.....

Đề tài tốt nghiệp được giao ngày tháng năm

Yêu cầu phải hoàn thành xong trước ngày tháng năm

Đã nhận nhiệm vụ ĐTTN

Đã giao nhiệm vụ ĐTTN

Sinh viên

Người hướng dẫn

Hải Phòng, ngày tháng.....năm 2018

Hiệu trưởng

GS.TS.NGƯT Trần Hữu Nghị

PHIẾU NHẬN XÉT CỦA GIẢNG VIÊN HƯỚNG DẪN TỐT NGHIỆP

Họ và tên giảng viên:

Đơn vị công tác:

Họ và tên sinh viên: Chuyên ngành:

Đề tài tốt nghiệp:

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Nội dung hướng dẫn:

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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

(Ký và ghi rõ họ tên)

CỘNG HÒA XÃ HỘI CHỦ NGHĨA VIỆT NAM

Độc lập - Tự do - Hạnh phúc

PHIẾU NHẬN XÉT CỦA GIÁO VIÊN CHĂM PHẢN BIỆN

Họ và tên giảng viên:

Đơn vị công tác:

Họ và tên sinh viên: Chuyên ngành:

Đề tài tốt nghiệp:

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1. Phần nhận xét của giáo viên chăm phản biện

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2. Những mặt còn hạn chế

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3. Ý kiến của giảng viên chăm phản biện

Được bảo vệ

Không được bảo vệ

Điểm phản biện

Hải Phòng, ngày ... tháng ... năm

Giảng viên chăm phản biện

(Ký và ghi rõ họ tên)

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, a raising problem encountered by students in general and first year ones in particular in the foreign languages department at Hai Phong Private University is extremely bad listening comprehension. This leads to a serious subsequence is that student's language proficiency is low as well as learning and teaching have to face many difficulties due to the reason that listening skill is an essential instrument when learning communication in any another languages. The problems were related to listening materials, students' physical limits, supporting equipment, in addition, the factors that have affected the difficulties in listening English are lack of knowledge and practice, English learning environment.... The purpose of this study is investigating students' difficulties in learning English listening comprehension and some solutions. The object of this study was 40 students of Foreign Languages Department who finished their first semester.

By this study, we suggest some solutions for this particular problem.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale

It could not be denied that English language in the whole world has become more and more important. English even becomes the international language, is used in many countries in a popular way and is the mother tongue of many countries over the world. In fact, English is the native language of more than 350 million people and it is spoken more than any other languages. It is the international language of different fields such as business, politics, science, technology, banking, tourism and others. Therefore, the demand for learning English is very great. In Vietnam as well as in other countries, there is a greater and greater need to learn English, from young to old, and from male to female alike. English gradually plays a vital role in Vietnam nowadays. Therefore, it is being taught at every educational level and it has become a compulsory subject in most schools. 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, I have faced many difficulties in listening. With four - year experience in learning the skill and from what me 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 I to do research on listening skill and as a result, a research title goes as “Difficulties of learning listening comprehension faced by first-year students of Foreign Languages Department at Hai Phong University”

1.2 Research objectives

The study is aimed at the following goals:

- 1) To find out the most common difficulties in learning listening comprehension faced by the HPU first-year English major.
- 2) To identify the causes of the problems of listening comprehension faced by the HPU first-year English major.
- 3) To find out and give some solutions to minimize the difficulties and improve efficiency in listening comprehension.

1.3 Research scope

Within this study, the researcher only focuses on the HPU first-year English major to investigate the troubles that students at this class usually encounter and then give some proposals to overcome discovered difficulties and to improve students listening ability. The population involved in the study is 40 first-year English major students of course 21st in the foreign languages department at Hai Phong Private University .

1.4 Research tasks

The study involves fulfilling the following tasks:

- 1) To study the definition, types of listening, process of listening comprehension, factors making listening comprehension difficult.
- 2) To investigate the most common difficulties in listening comprehension encountered by the first-year English majors students and causes of it.
- 3) Based on the major findings, possible suggestions to the problems are proposed to minimize the difficulties and enhance effectiveness in listening comprehension.

1.5 Research method

1.5.1 Data collection

I have already collected and read documents from book in library and previous papers in the internet to complete this study. Moreover, some of documents which my supervisor introduced and provided are greatly useful for my research.

1.5.2 Survey questionnaires

In terms of the methods, the questionnaire is designed as a mean for researcher to collect data. Questionnaires are more convenient, take less time, cheap and easy for students to answer. Moreover, questionnaires are considered more reliable way since they are anonymous and this encourages greater honesty. Questionnaires included closed and open-ended questions. The questionnaire is given to students of the first-year students of foreign languages department with the hope to find out their attitudes towards their listening skill and their difficulties in listening to English as well as their expectations to their teachers. As they are in their first academic year, they often experience such problems. It is stage that students should be equipped with variety of techniques right from their early listening. With appropriate strategies, they will have built up their listening skill by the time.

After gathering all the results of questionnaire with answers, the method of analyzing data is applied. Basing on the statistic numbers, I analyze and find out the situation, difficulties and then causes in order to suggest reasonable and effective solution for the problem.

1.6 Design of the research work

The research work has three main parts, namely: Introduction, Development and Conclusion. The part “Development” consists three chapters.

Chapter 1 is entitled “Theoretical basis of the study”. It includes 4 sections. The section one is about definition of listening, the next section argued about the significance of listening, then the section 3 is about the types of listening and the last one is about factors make listening comprehension difficult and it is also the most important part of this chapter.

Chapter 2 is named “An investigation into the first-year students of foreign languages department difficulties in listening comprehension”. It has three sections. Section one is devoted to the survey which focuses on the methods used to gather and analyze data and describes the current situation of students at HPU. The second section presents data analysis based on the

collected results of the survey. The last section makes discussion of some common problems faced by students and possible causes of these problems.

Chapter 3 is entitled: “Recommendations to improve listening comprehension skill of students”. It provides some recommendations for improvement of the listening comprehension.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL BASIS OF THE STUDY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is named Theoretical basis of the study in which the researcher will provide the foundation of knowledge about listening skill so that the readers have an overview of the topic of the study. It includes the definition, the significance and types of listening, factors make listening difficult.

2.2 Definition of listening

There have been different definitions of the term “listening comprehension.” According to Semiotician Roland Barthes: “Hearing is a physiological phenomenon, listening is a psychological act. “Hearing is always occurring, most of the time subconsciously. In contrast, listening is the interpretative action taken by the listener in order to understand and potentially make meaning out of the sound waves. Listening can be understood on three levels: alerting, deciphering, and an understanding of how the sound is produced and how the sound affects the listener (Barthes, Roland (1985) In the Responsibility of Forms, New York Hill and Wang). Listening is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. This process involves understanding a speaker’s accent or pronunciation, speaker’s grammar and vocabulary, and comprehension of meaning. An able listener is capable of doing these four things simultaneously (Saricoban, 1999). Definition of listening is also simplified is the activity of receiving, evaluating and understanding something we hear.

Arguing that what is successful listening, Anderson and Lynch (1988) also defined: “Understanding is not something that happens because of what a speaker says: the listener has a crucial part to play in the process, by activating various types of knowledge, and by applying what he knows to what he hears and trying to understand what the speaker means” (P6) Today, we realize that listening is a process acquiring people to be active and a listener is a good one when being active. To be well in listening, listeners must have the capability of analyzing and deciphering the message sent, and the ability of applying

strategies and skills to get meaning, and the ability to make the replying in many ways, basing on the content, the theme and the aim of the conversation. Listening also strongly relates to thoughts, emotions and intentions.

In conclusion, listening is a process of identifying and understanding what the speakers say, which includes understanding a speaker's pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary. Listeners have to know how to conduct and do the process under the circumstance in an active way, not make listening viewed as a passive process.

2.3 Significance of listening

Listening is the most frequently used language skill. We could not negate the importance of listening not only in classroom but also in our lives and listening is even more significant for each student due to that it is used as a first steps of studying at all stages of learning. Listening requires concentration and understanding in a short time with many factors makes listeners be in trouble like context, theme, content, or body languages delivered by others. Listening is especially important because that if our listening skill is not good and not developed, so is our speaking skill. Lundsteen also pointed that the first skill appeared is listening. The key to learn a language is perceiving language input and of course, listening is the key of that door. Listening also provides the condition and situation for other language skills.

2.4 Types of listening

Listening skills including of two main types are casual and focused listening going together, up to the aim of listening (Nguyen Thi Van Lam and Ngo Dinh Phuong, 2006).

2.4.1 Casual listening.

Casual listening, means listening without a particular purpose. When we listen, we do not pay much or even any attention to the information unless there is something that makes us interested, this leads to a case that we could hardly remember the content of what we have just heard. In life, we conduct this kind

of listening so much, for example, when we listen to music, or listen to news on the radio or TV while doing some housework or chatting to a friend.

2.4.2 Focused listening.

Focused listening, like its name of this type, it contrasts to casual listening, that is when we listen something in a concentrated way with a specific aim of finding out and gathering information that we are in demand. For instance, we use this kind of listening in the class, in the meeting or in a seminar talking about topic that we are interested.

2.5 Listening process

Listening process divides into five periods:

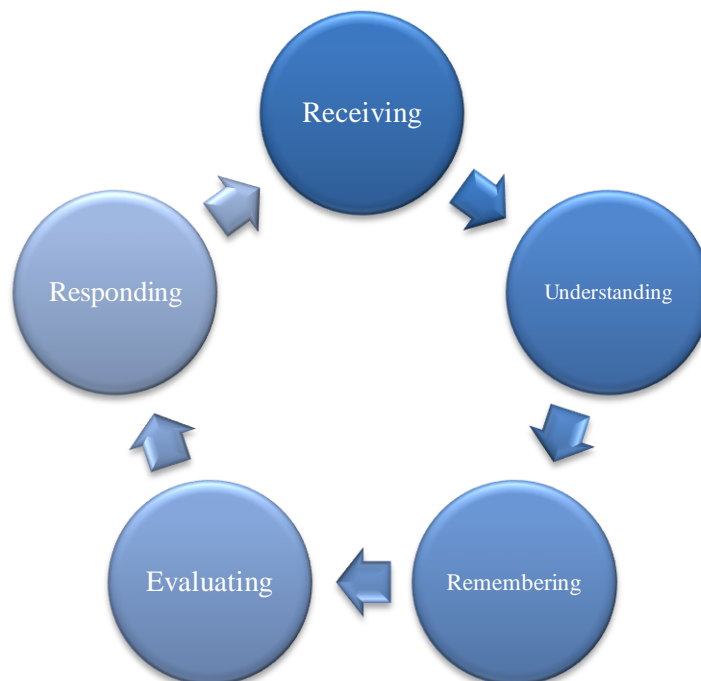


Chart 1.1. Five periods in listening process

Receiving - Understanding - Remembering - Evaluating - Responding

Receiving

It refers to the response caused by sound waves to the ear of listener. It is the physical response.

Understanding

At this stage, you learn what the speaker means through the thoughts and emotional tone. It is crucially important to communication process and exists in all speech.

Remembering

Remembering is needed for maintaining conversation because it means that a message has not only been delivered and interpreted but also added to the listener mind's storage bank.

Since human is mortal and our attention is selective, it caused that while we are in conversation, just some of information are collected in our internal memory. Consequently, what is remembered might be quite different from what was originally seen or heard.

Evaluating

This stage is mostly executed by conscious awareness, consists of judging the messages in some way. Meanwhile, you might try to penetrate the speaker's underlying intentions or motives.

Responding

In the conversation, with the aim of informing to speakers, whether the message has been received, the listeners have to send a feedback through verbal or nonverbal method. That is necessary for prolonging the conversation.

In conclusion, listening is the psychological process of receiving, attending to, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken or nonverbal messages (Syed Arif Ali Shah - Published on Jul 5, 2010).

2.6 Factors make listening difficult.

What makes listening difficult in learning English? Two skills: reading and listening, it was pointed that they have a strong relationship (Lund, 1991; Osada, 2004). Due to that the process of reading is more easily researched and observed, most research relating to evaluation of other language comprehension has concentrated on reading (Osada, 2004). For example, listeners have a worse memory for spoken information than readers do for written information, this is a clear truth (Lund, 1991). Moreover, characteristics of the listener influence to listening performance and reading performance in two different ways (Park, 2004).

Factors prevent listening process relating to both listener and passage delivered.

2.6.1 Factors relating to listener

2.6.1.1. Memory of listener

Working memory refers to the sensible system that is significant to the processing, storage, and output of information in memory (Baddeley and Hitch, 1974). Working memory is the thought including of a storage component and a control component called the central controlling. The central executive plays a role that could not be replaced in the process of operating in working memory.

Working memory makes a critical involvement in language comprehension. In theory, this involvement is quite logic since language comprehension not only has a strong relationship to some processes but also procedures of decoding and identification words. During the process of analyzing and evaluating the information, sentences and words that memory supposes that are the key and keep the content will be saved and gathered. In the process of analyzing sentences that are complicated and don't have clear meanings, individuals with high working memory capacity, in contrast to individuals with low capacity, might try to retain analysis and information until the input information is presented, of course in a better level. Indeed, there are clear theoretical arguments to suggest that working memory plays a critical role in listening (Engle, 2002). Working memory has been found to be concerned not only to reading comprehension, but also to other sensible processes in a higher level such as ability of explaining and capability of doing many tasks in a same time (Konig, Buhner, and Murling, 2005).

2.6.1.2. Proficient level to the second language

❖ *Vocabulary ability*

An obvious factor that makes a big influence on comprehension is the gap between the listener's vocabulary knowledge and the vocabulary of the message. For example, the passage is talking about a completely different topic or belonged to another special major, and the listener does not have any knowledge about that subject or just know a little bit, the result surely is that he could not understand what are talking about or luckily partly understand of that one.

Vocabularies in the conversation between two doctors are definitely different from the ones of the speech of a businessman and the listener does not have the block of specialized words of what he is listening will get in trouble with the information delivered.

❖ *Phonology and grammar*

According to a research of Goh (2000), 40 language students are asked to talk about the processes they used to act to the English spoken, as well as the problems they encountered. From the result of research, she found that when language students do not know how to pronounce a word, they will pronounce those words according to their native pronunciations. The pronunciation and grammar capability of the listeners decide the speed of evaluating and reacting to the information they get. With a sentence with length and complex grammar structure, the listener having low grammar ability will get in trouble with analyzing and delivering the suitable answer. And a clear thing is that if you do not pronounce a word in an exact way, you will not be able to hear what word being talked.

❖ *Background knowledge of the topic, content, and culture*

Listeners' background knowledge about a passage makes a big impact on the extent of their ability to understand what has been said. For example, a person is in a conference talking about a special topic, if he doesn't have the basic knowledge about that topic, he will not be able to understand all of the contents and meanings that speaker want to deliver. Another example, you go to another country and of course in that local, people have habit of using local words, not popular words, you will be surely in trouble with understand what are talking about.

2.6.2 Factors relating to passage and listening materials.

2.6.2.1 Passage length.

- *Passage length* is one of the biggest factors of preventing listening comprehension and what extent listener could understand with amount of delivered information (Alderson et al., 2006; Bejar, Douglas, Jamieson, Nissan,

and Turner, 2000; Carroll, 1977, cited in Dunkel, 1991, p. 440; Rost, 2006). Be different from reading, listening comprehension just occurs in very short time, the listener will not have any selection of going back and listening again to something they failed to comprehend. Instead, the result of such a failure will lead to a next result that listener will lose his chance of listening the continuous information, because he invests too much time in trying to understand what are missed, or could not comprehend later information because the later strongly relates to the next and it relies on the understanding of earlier information (Goh, 2000; O'Malley, Chamot, and Kupper, 1989). Longer passages may be more likely to interrupt comprehension due to the limit of listeners' working memory storage capacity (Henning, 1990). In addition, longer a passage is, more information listeners could miss after being in trouble with information they do not understand. The level of listening capability of listeners is also the reason making the length of passage have heavier impact (Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari, 2010). Learners with lower proficiency are in habit of trying to understand and finding the underlying meanings of the passage on basis of understanding word-by-word, this takes much time and leads to failure to attend the continuing stream of information (Field, 2004; O'Malley et al., 1989; Vandergrift, 2003).

2.6.2.2. Passage complexity.

❖ Syntactic complexity

To measuring the complexity of a passage, we depend on elements of structure of the phrases and sentences. Factors may be related are sentence structure, negatives, dependent clauses, and referential. There is a question regularly asked: "Should I simplify this sentence structures for making the passage easier to understand?" There is a mixture between researched papers, so there is not enough reliable answer for this wonder, whether a sentence with a complex syntax is harder to comprehend than a similar sentence with an easier one. According to Blau (1990), the effect of sentence structure on listening comprehension is not considerable, especially with high English ability students

and in spite of simplifying the syntactic structure of a passage, the efficiency of second language listening is not improved. Otherwise, Nissan et al. (1996) implied that a sentence going with just two or more negatives, the difficulty of that sentence is raising and the listeners apparently face more hardness.

❖ *Infrequent words*

The occurrence of infrequent words in a passage contributes to its complexity and difficulty. Infrequent words in a passage may impact listening comprehension difficultly because listeners are less likely to be familiar with low-frequency words, and so they may need more time for inferring the meaning of low-frequency words in a passage or even they will ignore those words (Nissan et Al. 1995). When listening texts contain known words it would be very easy for students to understand and get information. If students know the meaning of words, this can raise their interest and motivation and can have a positive impact on the students' listening comprehension ability. A lot of words have more than one meaning and if they are not used appropriately in their appropriate contexts, students will get confused.

❖ *Culturally specific vocabulary and idioms*

Kostin (2004) explored the effect of idioms and culturally specific vocabulary in the passage on listening comprehension. The American Heritage Dictionary (2000) defines idiom is as an expression consisting of two or more words having a meaning that cannot be deduced from the meanings of its constituent parts. An example: *It rains cat and dog*- an expression that cannot be understood even if the listener knows the meanings of *rain, cat* and *dog*.

Learners should be familiar with the cultural knowledge of language that has a significant effect on the learners' understanding. If the listening task involves completely different cultural materials then the learners may have critical problems in their comprehension. It is the responsibility of teachers to give background knowledge about the listening activities in advance.

2.6.2.3. Passage type.

2.6.2.3.1 Passage topic.

Another characteristic that might affect the efficiency of listening comprehension is the topic of passages. According to Sadighi - Zare, 2006 and Tyler, 2001, passages with familiar topics are generally easier for listeners to understand than unfamiliar ones. And whether a passage is on an academic or non-academic topic is also a problem, because a topic talking about normal problems will be easier to understand with simple and frequent words, oppositely, an academic topic will be more difficult for listeners, especially listeners not having specialized knowledge about that topic.

2.6.2.3.2. Passage type.

Different passages have difference of structures and lectures and recorded conversations are two types of passages founded basing on very different structures. On the other hand, when attending to a lecture, listeners must hear long stretches of uninterrupted speech, of course they will not have the opportunity to turn back or pause time for thinking, and they must be able to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information in a presently short time (Flowerdew, 1994). Furthermore, lectures are generally spoken in specialized knowledge, though they do not require that the listener be able to understand implied and indirect speech (Flowerdew, 1994). Besides, lectures have more complicated sentences that make listeners be in problems including that clauses, subordinate clauses, subordinate conditional clauses, first and second person pronouns, contractions, and the pronoun it (Tyler, Jeffries, and Davies, 1988), and in order not to be in that such case, listeners have to spend time looking for and research for relevant references.

In sum, some research suggests passage organization or type may impact listening comprehension because of an effect on working memory. Presenting information in a more organized way makes this information easier to encode and maintain in working memory (Anderson, 2004; Baddeley, Lewis, Eldridge, and Thompson, 1984). Further, the relationship between working memory

capacity and tasks involving reading comprehension or recognition differs depending on whether the topic is familiar or unfamiliar (Leeser, 2007). Findings such as these indicate that the role of working memory in listening comprehension is likely to be affected by the organization of the passage and its topic. When the passage topic is unfamiliar or its content is less organized, listening comprehension may be more difficult.

2.6.2.4. Auditory features of the passage

❖ Speaker accent

In general, even if the listeners have an excellent listening skill, they are still challenged when speakers have different and local accent. Research about the effect of accent on listening comprehension provides strong evidence that comprehension will decrease and effort for understanding will increase with the unfamiliarity of the speaker's accent. Accent is an important factor to consider in choosing listening materials for English learners, as it will affect to comprehension. Further, research indicates that it is more important to consider the accent familiarity of the speaker when speech rate or noise are factors already present in the auditory materials.

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

❖ *Speed of speaking*

Speed of speaking is words per minute (Blau, 1990; Brindley and Slatyer, 2002; Griffiths, 1990, 1992; Jacobs et al., 1988; Zhao, 1997). Think about two speakers - one fast, one slow - talking with the same spoken passage. The speaker with the faster speech takes less time, conveying the information more quickly, than the slower speaker. Now with the same amount of time, these speakers speak passages with different lengths, the faster speaker produces more speech, conveying more of the passage, than the slower speaker. Results of several studies suggest that speech rate can negatively affect second language comprehension. Faster speech is often less clear than slower speech, although speech rate and auditory clarity are distinct properties. Although Griffiths (1990, 1992) described that the listeners as lower intermediate learners, more recent evidence suggests that speech rate also influences listening comprehension among relatively advanced second language users. The research provides evidence that speech rate can negatively affect second language listening comprehension. In real, second language listeners move from passage to passage and encounter different speakers and different content. Because listeners are more likely to perceive speech as fast when other features challenge comprehension, speech rate must be considered in conjunction with other aspects of the listener, passage, and environment.

Speed can make listening passage difficult. If the speakers speak too fast students may have serious problems to understand words. In this situation, listeners are not able to control the speed of speakers and this can create critical problems with listening comprehension.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter is implemented with the research method in this study. It is included research design, population and sample, research instrument, data collection as well as data analysis.

3.1 Research design

About design of research, this study is implemented with descriptive quantitative research design. This design was used in order to gather information about freshmen in Foreign Languages Department at Hai Phong Private University's problems encountered in listening skill.

3.2 Population and sample

With the aim of completing the research, the researcher will need a group of participants called the population of the study. In this study, freshmen of Foreign Languages Department at Hai Phong Private University will be the population. The total is 40 students in academic year 2017 – 2018. The research took all 40 students at class NA2101 as the sample of the research.

A large numbers of them have learnt English for 7 years (4 years at secondary school and 3 years at high school). However, their English backgrounds are quite similar because of being influence of curriculum of English for high schools students in the past, students did not have many chances to practice English skills. Thus, when entering HPU, their English levels were limited and they have to face up with many difficulties in studying. They have recognized their difficulties, needs, achievement and so on related to listening activities.

3.3. Data collection instruments.

3.3.1. The survey questionnaire.

The questionnaires were designed for students in the way that the researcher finds them easy to summarize and analyze the collected data. Questionnaires for students consist of 14 questions which are specified in the three research questions. Therefore, the survey questionnaire for students was

delivered to 40 major first - year students of NA2101 in Foreign Languages Department, HPU to find information for the three research questions.

Among the 14 questions, the first part from question 4 to 8 are designed for collecting their opinion on studying listening skill, questions 9 to 11 of part II aim at finding out the causes affecting to English listening skill; questions 12 to 14 of part III mainly seek for activities for improving English listening skill for first-year students of NA2101 in Foreign Languages Department, HPU.

To guarantee the reliability and the validity of the samples, the questionnaires for learners were directly distributed for learners of NA2101 during their break time in the class and collected right away. That meant these learners could pay most attention to answer the questions related to what they had just experienced. Before asking the learners to do the survey questionnaire, the researcher briefly stated the purpose and significance of the study and clarified any misunderstanding about the survey questions. Beside the written instructions on the handout, the oral instructions and explanations in Vietnamese were presented to avoid any ambiguity. In the end, there were 15 students participating in giving responses to the survey questionnaire.

3.4 Data collection

This section explains all of processes that are related to get information to find out the solutions for the statement problems. The steps of collecting the data in this study are as follows:

- Explaining about the questionnaires to the students. The researcher explains the items clearly to avoid misunderstanding.
- Giving instruction to the students to fill out the questionnaires.
- Collecting the students' questionnaires.

3.5 Data analysis

The next step after the researcher collects the data is analyzing the data.

There are some steps in analyzing the data. They are presented as follows:

- Reading and identifying the questionnaires that had been answered.
- Classifying the result of the questions

- Composing tables to classify students' problems and strategies used based on the questionnaires.

- Calculating the result taken from the students' answer based on the tables.

- Going to conclusion based on the data analysis.

3.6 Conclusion

Almost 40 copies of the questionnaire delivered to the learners. The data are analyzed in this part of the study in the below tables and charts which show the responses for the questions in the questionnaires. Besides, the second question the questionnaires bring a result that according to students' opinion, listening skill is very difficult.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Findings.

4.1.1. Student's real situations of learning English listening skill.

In the part of personal information, most of students come from rural areas. It means that many of them did not have much chance to practice English skills at high school and the skills that they concentrated in are reading and writing for preparing for university and graduation exams. Therefore, students recognize that they have learnt English from 7 to over 9 years, they might get very high scores in English tests but they could not communicate in English and most of them are bad at listening skill.

Among the 10 questions, the first part from question 1 to 3 are designed for collecting their opinion on studying listening skill, questions 4 to 5 are finding out the causes affecting to English listening skill; questions 6 to 10 mainly seek for activities for improving English listening skill for first-year students of NA2101 in Foreign Languages Department, HPU.

4.1.1.1. The opinion.

The 40 copies of the questionnaire delivered to the learners. The data are analyzed in this part of the study in the below tables and charts which show the responses for the questions in the questionnaires. Besides, the second question the questionnaires bring a result that according to students' opinion, listening skill is very difficult.

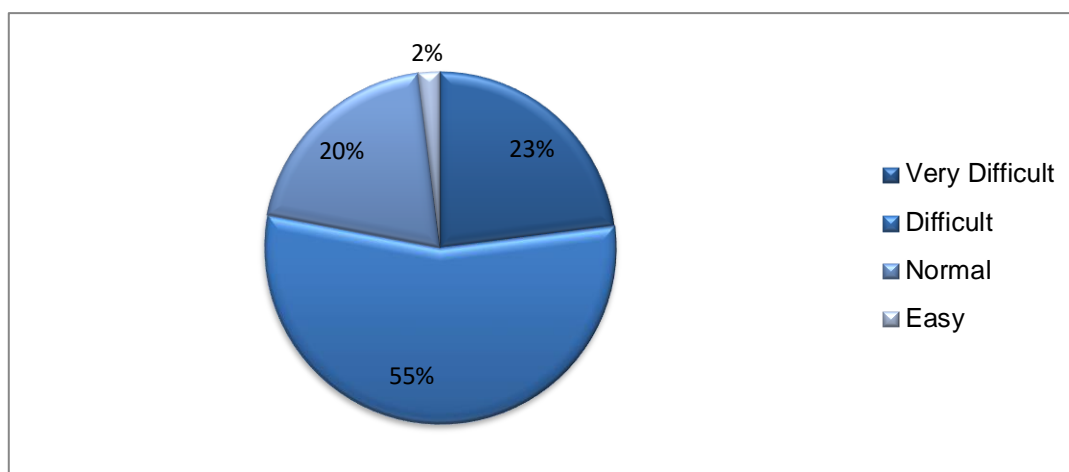


Chart 2.1: The students' assessment of learning listening skill

It can be seen obviously in the chart that listening skill is a difficult skill to learn. 55% of the learners suppose that listening is difficult. For the students, listening to English and learning this skill is really a problem. Moreover, the number of learners who agree that learning listening skill is very difficult took 23%. It is the same as the number of the learners who find learning listening normal (20%) or easy (2%). In fact, as what can be seen by the observation, the learners who confirm that it is easy to learn listening skill are the best students and students in urban have condition of learning English in English Centers or international schools. In short, the survey proved the assumption about the difficulty of listening to English and learning it.

4.1.1.2. The importance of listening skill.

To research more clearly the opinion of teachers and students in Foreign Languages Department, HPU, the third question in the questionnaire is designed to find out their assessment on the importance of listening.

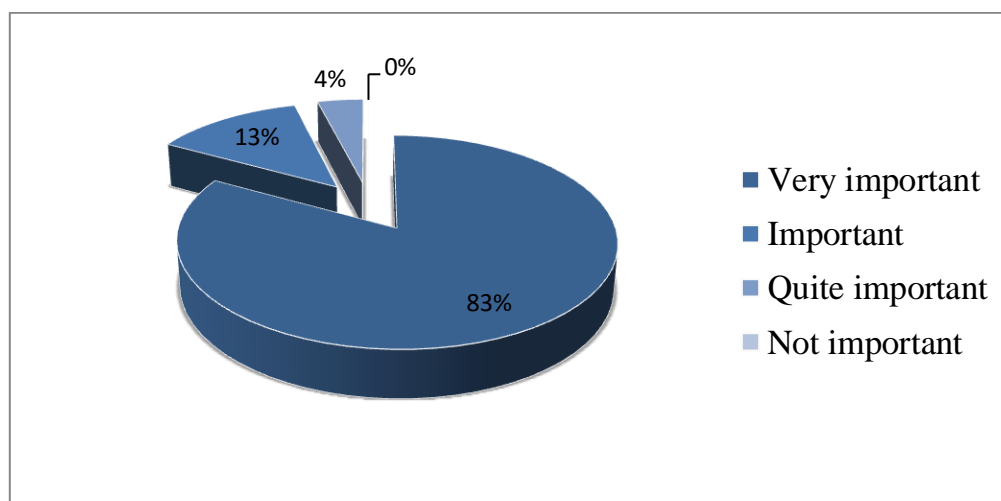


Chart 2.2. Students' attitudes towards the importance of English listening skill

It can be seen clearly from the table 2.2 most of the students agree that learning listening skill is very important as well as very important is 83%. Meanwhile, there are only 4% of them reckon that it is quite important. This chart shows that most of students at Foreign Languages Department , HPU claim that English listening skill has an important role in learning English with a lot of fields in life.

In conclusion, listening skill is one of the most necessary skills to communicate in the real life. In learning English, it is more and more important to learn this skill.

4.1.2. Causes of difficulties in English listening skill.

4.1.2.1. Some problems in learning English listening skill.

To have more details about the problems related to listening skill the student face up with, the fourth question of the questionnaire is designed. The result is shown on the chart below.

The Problems	
I find it difficult to guess the meaning of unknown words by linking them to.	30%
I find it difficult to use the context to guess those parts of a listening text that I cannot hear clearly.	30%
I find it difficult to understand listening texts in which there are too many unfamiliar words.	62%
I find it difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced clearly.	57%
I find it difficult to understand listening texts which have difficult grammatical structures.	37%
I find it difficult to understand well when speakers speak too fast.	77%
I find it difficult to understand the listening text when speakers speak with varied accents.	45%
I find it difficult to really concentrate on listening.	25%
I find it difficult to reduce my anxiety before doing the listening task.	35%
Unclear sounds resulting from a poor-quality CD-player interfere with my listening comprehension.	62%

Table2.1. The problems of students having in learning English listening skill

Statistics provide in Table 2.3 shows the problems of students face up when learning listening skill. According to the collected data, difficult to understand well when speakers speak too fast is the most problem of 77% of students face with. Additionally, 62% of student find it difficult to understand listening texts in which there are too many unfamiliar words and unclear sounds resulting from a poor-quality CD-player interfere with my listening comprehension. Just 25% of them find it difficult to reduce my anxiety before doing the listening task. To sum up, students always have problems in listening English and this is a thing that students need repairing.

4.1.2.2. The difficulties are often encountered by students when learning English listening skill.

To find the techniques to improve listening skill for first-year English major students at HPU, the researcher wants to find out the reasons which make you difficult to learn English listening. The fifth question in the questionnaires is designed for researching this thing. Some factors are often be encountered:

- Poor qualities CDs and CD players
- Unfamiliar content listening test
- Limited practice time
- Fast speaking speed
- ...

Below is the chart of the difficulties in students' listening skill.

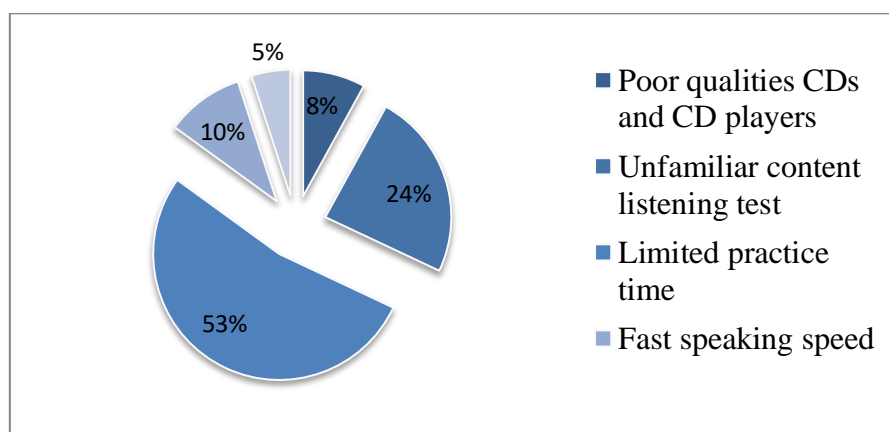


Chart 2.3. Difficulties in students' listening

The chart shows that the poor quality of CDs and CD players is not a big problem. Only 8% of the learners think it made them difficult to listen. There is 24% chose the factor unfamiliar content listening transcript. The most number of the students (53%) find that the main reason for the difficulties in listening is the limited time of practicing at class. Besides, 10% of learners think that the speaking speed is very fast. Except those factors, 5% of the learners also point some other factors affecting their listening are teaching methods, their background knowledge, pronunciation practice.

In short, most of students agree that the difficult of students often have in English listening skill is that they don't recognize words that they know.

4.1.3. Improvement English listening skill.

4.1.3.1. The kinds of listening text which students expect to practice more.

The question sixth of questionnaire for students mentioned to the kinds of listening text which students expect to practice more.

Some types of text:

- Songs
- Films or stories
- News, speeches or lectures
- Dialogues, conversations or interviews

The collected data has shown in the below chart:

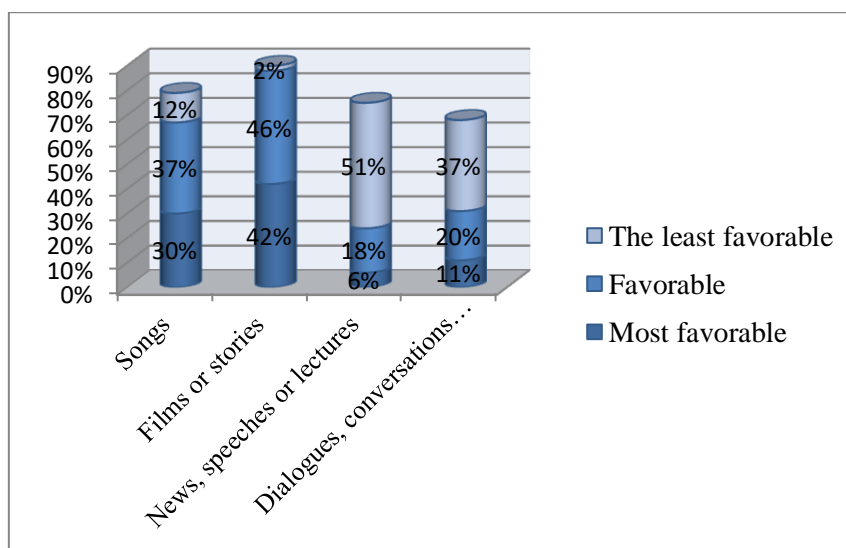


Chart 2.4. Students' interest in extra listening activities

As it can be seen from the above bar chart, most of the students liked listening to the films or stories. Listening to the films or stories are the most favorite activities of 42% of the students. Only 2% of them are not interested in this kind. In contrast to the dialogues, listening to the news, speeches or lectures bored the most students (51%). As a consequence, 6% of them find interested in these kinds of monologue. Besides, listening to the songs seems interesting. But, it is surprising when only 30% of the learners love them. Moreover, a small part of them (12%) are not excited about the songs. Watching films or listening to the dialogues, conversations or interviews is accepted because 20% of them suppose those are their favorite activities and 11% affirm those are their most favorite activities. In conclusion, most of the students like listening to the dialogues, conversations and interview.

4.1.3.2. The factors affecting to the interest in English listening skill.

To find out the factors have influence on the interested in English listening skill, the question 7 of questionnaire is mention about it. Four factors that influence in this skill, students give their opinion in this thing.

- Interesting topics
- Exciting activities
- Adequate and modern equipment
- Good teaching methods
- ...

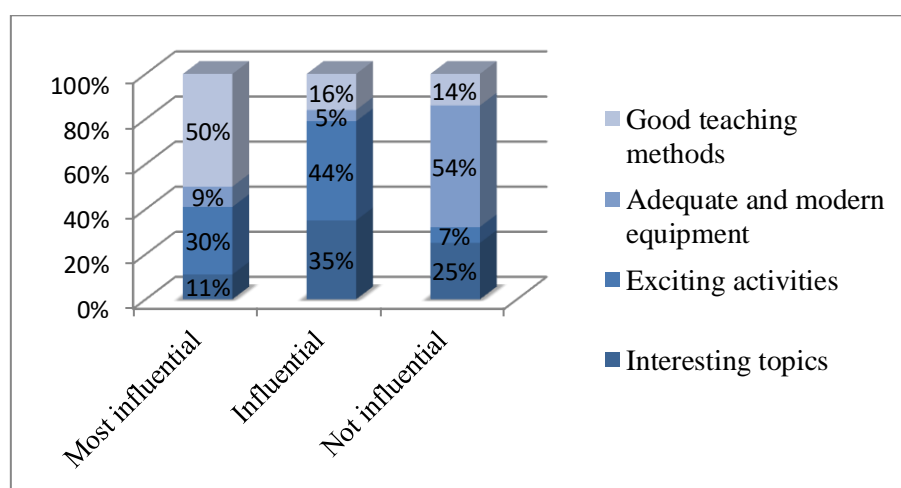


Chart 2.5. Factors motivating students' learning listening skill

It is easy to see from the above chart that the most influential factor to the students' motivation is the good teaching methods. 50% of the students affirm that. 16% of them think they are influential. So teaching method is the first element that all the teachers should notice in teaching any skills, not only for the listening skill. The next factor that many students find interested is the listening activities. 30% of the learners define the exciting activities motivate them a lot to learn better. Furthermore, 44% suppose that they are influential. A small number (7%) of the students think activities do not effect. In the meanwhile, 11% of the students rank the interesting listening topics the most influential factor, and 35% agree they are influential. Also, 25% say the topics have no effects their listening. The least influential factor of four is the equipment. Adequate and modern equipment are assessed that it does not have any effect on the learners' learning the listening skill by 54% of the learners. It is an amazing number due to the need of the equipment.

4.1.3.3. The activities students like most in listening English class.

The next question in the questionnaire for students is about the activities students like most in listening English class. There are some activities frequently occurring in listening English class with types of exercises:

- Ticking off (phrases, pictures)
- Completing the missing words
- Choosing the correct answer
- Answering the comprehension questions
-

The collected data are shown in the below table:

Assessment	Ticking off (phrases, pictures)	Completing the missing words	Choosing the correct answer	Answering the comprehension questions
Most favorite	40%	19%	29%	18%
Favorite	27%	37%	31%	11%
Normal	23%	35%	30%	22%
Uninterested	10%	9%	10%	49%

Table 2.2. Students' opinion about the activities that they like most in listening English class

From the table, it can be seen that the most favorite listening activities were ticking off the items they hear (40%) and choosing the correct answers (29%). Most students (49%) feel uninterested in answering the comprehension questions. Besides, only 18% of the learners confine comprehension questions are the most favorite activity. And only 11% of them like answering the comprehension questions. Meanwhile, completing the missing words or information is supposed a normal activity. 35% of the learners think it normal and 37% of them liked it. Then, listening activities affect the students' interest in learning this skill a lot.

According to the collected information of the interview, when asked "What kinds of activities in class do you like most?". Two students of them like playing games which relate to topic, choose the correct answer and ticking off. The other student share: "I am interested in playing games and complete the missing words. It is a useful way to improve vocabulary".

In conclusion, the activities in listening English class play an important in learning and teaching English. It will bring students and teachers much interest.

4.1.3.4. The activities students should do before and while listening in class.

In the listening class, how they learned this skill. There are some activities that student should do:

Before listening:

- Pre-taught some related new words
- Predict the content of the listening texts by the activities that the teacher gives
- Checking / understanding the listening tasks
-

While listening:

- Listen and take notes
- Focus on key words
- ...

The following charts would express the ways they did it.

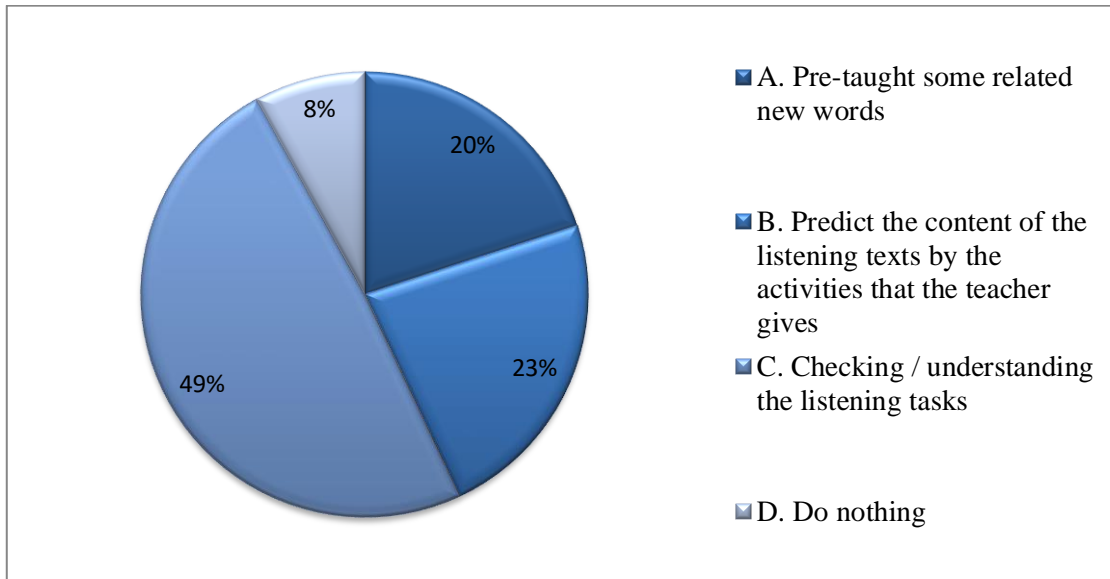


Chart 2.6. What students should do before listening.

The chart shows that most students (49%) in listening classes checking / understanding the listening tasks gives by the teacher. But some of them only learn the new words (20%) and the other learners (23%) guess the content before they start listening. Just have 8% students do not do anything. In conclusion, students should prepare things that relate to the text before listening.

So while listening, what students should do? The next chart will show this question.

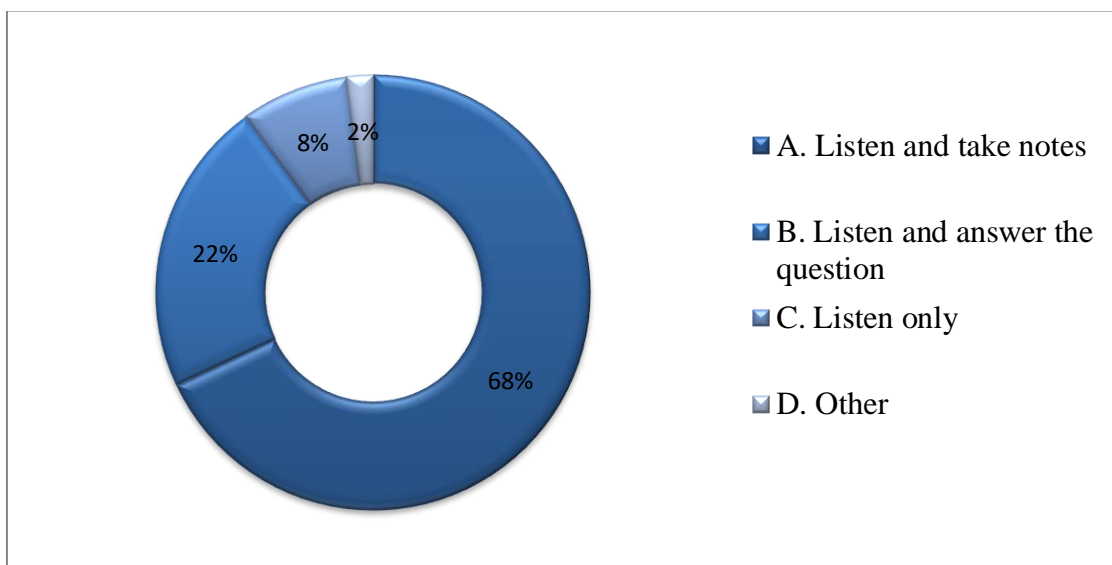


Chart 2.7. What students should do while listening

The chart shows that the majority of the learners (68%) know to take notes while listening. It is a positive activity which helps students a lot in

training the listening skill both in the English class as well as other real life situations. 22% of them often try to answer the questions while they are listening. The other 8% of them only listen. These results reflect the method of teaching and learning the listening skill.

In conclusion, English listening skill is a difficult subject and what students do before and while listening is important.

4.2. Discussion.

4.2.1. Opinions of students about English listening skill.

Generally, it is very clear from above the data analysis that both teachers and students have plenty of difficulties in teaching and learning listening. Most of first-year students in Foreign Languages Department at HPU say that English listening is difficult (55% of students) and very difficult (23% of students).

4.2.2. Current situation in learning English listening skill.

According to the first-year students in Foreign Languages Department, there are some main reasons (Poor-quality CDs and CD players, unfamiliar content listening text, limited practice time at class) affecting students a lot while they learn English listening skill. In addition, the subjective factor affecting the students' learning English listening skill is that students try to listen to every words so they could not catch up the speed of the speech (77% of students say that).

The most activities that students want to do in class are ticking off the items they hear (40%) and choosing the correct answers (19%). Most of students also agree that there are some activities to improve English listening skill, such as: before listening, students should pre-taught some related new words and predict the content of the listening texts by the activities that the teacher gives; while listening, students should listen and take note.

In conclusion, in order to get the maximum benefits of offered technique, some recommendations are proposed to the major first-year students in Foreign Languages Department.

4.2.3. Suggestions for improving English listening skill.

4.2.3.1. Solutions for factors relating to listener.

To facilitate listening tasks and improve the learners' listening skills in process of learning listening, the learners should:

- Adopting a positive attitude;
- Being responsive;
- Shutting out distractions;
- Listening for the speaker's purpose;
- Looking for the signals of what is to come;
- Looking for summaries of what has gone before;
- Evaluating the supporting materials;
- Looking for non-verbal clues.

The students want to learn the listening well, they themselves ought to try their best to change their bad habits of listening and to improve their background knowledge. Today there are many ways to learn English, to improve your listening skills, every day you should spend 5 to 10 minutes or more to listen to short English news. According to the survey, most students had habits of listening to every word in the recording so they soon got tired and frustrated of listening. As a consequence, they answered the listening tasks mainly by guessing but not by understanding the text. It is not necessary for learners to understand every word in order to understand the information they need from the recording. Therefore, learners should learn to focus on the message. When listening, the learners should summarize the ideas they listen to and take notes. They had better not translate the listening text into the mother tongue, but try to understand it in the target language. Moreover, outside the listening class, students have to practice regularly such as listening to English songs, listening in VOA, watching foreign channels (such as: HBO, CINEMAX, you can watch the American films to improve your English listening comprehension) so as to get acquainted with the native accent in normal speech. In addition, they must

enrich themselves with general knowledge of the English speaking countries, English language, and social and cultural knowledge.

4.2.3.2. Solution for factors relating to passage and listening materials.

Not all the tips mentioned can be followed and not all the problems can be overcome. Certain features of the message and the speaker, for instance, are inevitable. But this does not mean that the teacher can do nothing about them. She/he can at least provide the students with suitable listening materials, background and linguistic knowledge, enabling skills, pleasant classroom conditions, and useful exercises to help them discover effective listening strategies. Here are a few helpful ideas:

- Grade listening materials according to the students' level, and provide authentic materials rather than idealized, filtered samples. It is true that natural speech is hard to grade and it is difficult for students to identify the different voices and cope with frequent overlaps.

- Design task-oriented exercises to engage the students' interest and help them learn listening skills subconsciously. Listening exercises are most effective if they are constructed round tasks expressing agreement or disagreement, taking notes, marking a picture or diagram according to instructions, and answering questions.

- Provide students with different kinds of input, such as lectures, radio news, films, announcements, everyday conversation, English songs, and so on. Select short, simple listening texts with little redundancy for lower-level students and complicated authentic materials with more redundancy for advanced learners. Provide background knowledge and linguistic knowledge, such as complex sentence structures and colloquial words and expressions, as needed.

It may very well happen that during one lesson the teacher may serve as a psychologist, an actor or a singer. Teaching songs is, of course, both pleasant and effective. But to achieve better results in comprehension the teacher is

- to prepare the learners before they listen to anything;

- to show them pictures of characters from the song;
- to use actions as much as possible to accompany songs so that the listeners can participate . This will help build their confidence, and give them extra clues to the meaning of the words they are listening to.

- to use the same song again and again. Listening is a difficult skill so building the learners' confidence is vital at all stages of language learning. If they recognize the words they will be much more motivated. This is valid not only from a language point of view but also from a logical point of view. Listening to a song you know and like is always an enjoyable experience.

Using songs and chants in class gives the students a chance to listen and reproduce the language they hear. They are working on the sounds, rhythm and intonation and can have a chance of sounding natural.

Songs can be the first step which can be followed by more sophisticated material which will include hesitations, rephrasing, and a variety of accents. The language needs to be comprehensible and the level of difficulty can be controlled by the selection of the task (Yagang, 1994).

Use of authentic material, such as workplace training videos, audio tapes of actual workplace exchanges, and TV and radio broadcasts also becomes very helpful for listening. Opportunities to develop both top-down and bottom-up processing skills should be offered. As mentioned above, top-down oriented activities encourage the learners to discuss what they already know about a topic, and bottom-up practice activities give confidence in accurate hearing and comprehension of the components of the language (sounds, words, intonation, grammatical structures).

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

This chapter will deal with a summary of the major findings, contribution, limitations of the study and some suggestions for further studies.

5.1. Summary of the study.

To reach what the author aimed at this study, the study was divided into five chapters with their own purpose. The first chapter briefly covers the theories related to the study. The second chapter presented the theoretical basis of learning English listening skill. The third chapter presented the research methodology of the approach to listening in English Department through the questionnaires and interview. Fourth chapter also helps the author find the answers for three research questions that stated in the introduction. The last chapter is some recommendations and suggestions to improve English listening skill at HPU.

5.2. Contribution and recommendation of the study.

5.2.1. Contribution of the study.

5.2.1.1. Contribution to the theory.

The study finds out new problems in process of listening of listeners with English and provides additionally useful solutions for improving listening skill.

5.2.1.2. Contribution to the practice.

The study finds out several problems occurred in the teaching and learning of listening of freshman in foreign languages department at Hai Phong Private University. The problems were related to listeners' ability, listening materials, and supporting equipment. Based on the data obtained, the problems and situation are analyzed and from the basis of that analysis, the study suggests some solutions for improving and developing English listening skill of freshman in foreign languages department at Hai Phong Private University.

5.2.2. Recommendation of the study.

For students, to develop the listening skill for the long term, students also should practice daily for short memory by listening short news or dialogues then

take notes and repeat content of the passage. Additionally, learning for new words, more and more, doing many exercises for improving grammar. Reading more and more documents or watching videos on social network to know more and have knowledge of culture of the local.

For listening materials, this is dependent on mainly teachers, grading listening materials, designing task-oriented exercises, or providing students with different kinds of input, etc. All are useful ideas for improving listening efficiency of the students.

5.3. Limitation of the study.

Although the study has certain strong points such as collection methods, survey questionnaires for students, due to limited time, lack of sources, the researcher's ability and other unexpected factors, it is obvious that the study has got a number of short-comings.

First of all, due to the limited of time, experience to some extent, the researcher could not conduct other methods such as classroom observation which can make the obtained results more reliable.

Secondly, due to the limitation of scope of the study, the researcher only focus on the first-year students in Faculty of Foreign Language which account for a small number of students in foreign languages department at Hai Phong Private University. Therefore, the result of the study can't be generalized. Besides, the researcher could not cover all the aspects of difficulties.

In addition, the techniques suggested in this research are selected from different reliable but limited sources.

In spite of the mentioned limitations, I hope that this exploratory research will contribute to the better situation of teaching and learning English listening skill in in foreign languages department, HPU.

5.4. Suggestions for the further study.

Because of the limitation, this study could not cover all of aspects of the study. Besides, the study only focuses on difficulties for only first-year students in foreign languages department in order to help them improve their listening

skill. Moreover, for the further studies, to get better results, the researcher should invite more participants and the data collection method. Together with using survey questionnaires and interviews, observation is also necessary to get more persuasive conclusions.

All in all, despite the study can avoid to the limitation, the research has been completed under the guiding of the supervisor and self-effort. Any comments and criticism will be highly appreciated for better further study.

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41. Syed Arif Ali Shah – Published on Jul 5, 2010

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

This survey questionnaire is designed for my graduation paper namely: “Difficulties of English listening comprehension faced by First-year students in Foreign languages department at HPU”. In completing these questions, please choose the answer by circling the letter next to your choice, ticking off the items in a checklist or expressing your idea in the blanks. All your personal information as well as your answers will be kept confident and not be used for the other purposes.

Thanks for your help!

1. How long have you been learning English?

A. 5 years B. 6 years C. 7 years D. Over 7 years

2. In your opinion, English listening skill is.....

A. Very difficult B. Difficult C. Quite difficult D. Not difficult E. Others

3. What do you think about the importance of English listening skill?

A. Very important B. Important C. Quite important D. Not important E. Others

4. What problems related to listening do you face up with? (Please tick in the right column and more than one choice)

The Problems	
I find it difficult to guess the meaning of unknown words by linking them to.	
I find it difficult to use the context to guess those parts of a listening text that I cannot hear clearly.	
I find it difficult to understand listening texts in which	

there are too many unfamiliar words.	
I find it difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced clearly.	
I find it difficult to understand listening texts which have difficult grammatical structures.	
I find it difficult to understand well when speakers speak too fast.	
I find it difficult to understand the listening text when speakers speak with varied accents.	
I find it difficult to really concentrate on listening.	
I find it difficult to reduce my anxiety before doing the listening task.	
Unclear sounds resulting from a poor-quality CD-player interfere with my listening comprehension.	

5. Which of the following reasons possibly make it difficult you to learn listening English?

- A. Poor –quality CDs and CD players
- B. Unfamiliar content listening text
- C. Limited practice time at class
- D. Fast speed speaking
- E. Others

6. What kinds of listening texts do you expect to be introduced? (Put the tick (✓) in your choice)

Kinds of listening texts	The least favorable	Favorable	Most favorable
A. Songs			
B. Films or stories			
C. News, speech or lecture			
D. Dialogues: conversations, interviews, etc.			

7. What most motivate you to learn listening skill?

Items	Most influential	Influential	Not influential
A. Interesting topic			
B. Exciting activities			
C. Adequate modern equipment			
D. Good teaching methods			

8. What listening activities do you like most?

A. Tick off (phrases/ pictures/items)

- B. Complete the missing words
- C. Choose the correct answers
- D. Answer comprehension questions
- E. Others

9. What activities or tasks, in your opinion, should be applied for Pre-listening?

- A. Should pre-taught some related new words .
- B. Should predict the content of the listening texts by the activities that the teacher gives.
- C. Checking/Understanding the listening tasks
- D. Do nothing

10. What activities or tasks, in your opinion, should be carried out for While-listening?

- A. Listen and take notes
- B. Listen and answer the questions
- C. Listen only
- D. Others

Thank you very much for your cooperation!