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## Difficulties in English Listening of English Majored Juniors at Tay Do University in Viet Nam

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**ABSTRACT:** *Listening seemed to be the most important subject because it affected communication directly. However, many students especially the juniors had many difficulties in listening subject. Thus, this study explored the difficulties in English listening of English majored juniors at Tay Do University. The participants were 50 students of English classes. A questionnaire was an instrument in the study. The result would point out the difficulties as background knowledge, vocabulary, pronunciation and accents, psychological obstacles in English listening of juniors majoring in English.*

**KEY WORDS:** listening, difficulty, English majored student, university

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### INTRODUCTION

English has now become the most popular language in the world. In Viet Nam, it had been more appreciated after the country joined World Trade Organization. Children learn English even from primary school. Every day, an increasing number of people learn and use English for different purposes. English is the international language and widely used in all aspect of life, from school to economics. Especially, English plays an important role in job requirement in many developing countries. More importantly, English has been influenced on education curriculum as a compulsory subject.

English has four skills reading, speaking, writing and listening that have to be mastered by the students. From these skills, listening is a difficult skill to be mastered because it needs more attention and concern to comprehend the sounds. According to Vandergrift (1997), "Listening skill requires hypothesizing, prediction, generalizing, revising and checking for the listening inputs". Students have to prepare carefully before listening. Most of students face some problems in listening because they cannot understand what the speaker says. It is far more difficult than many people can image. In fact, people do not understand what the others mean, they cannot cope immediately what others' mention. Communication is a part of human's daily activities, through communication by using language, people can share their ideas with other people. Actually, listening is considered as the main key that

helps people communicate effectively because “Listening skill is essential for learning since they enable students to acquire insights and information, and to achieve success in communicating with others.” (Wallace et al 2004).

Many second language learners take much time and energy to make progress in listening skill. Students usually do not understand the messages in listening and they think that listening is a difficult subject. According to Rost (1994), “Listening is vital in language classroom because it provides input for learners. Without understanding input at right level, any learning simply cannot begin. Listening is thus fundamental to speaking.” Moreover, “Listening comprehension is the basic skill in language learning, without listening comprehension skill, learners will never learn to communicate effectively” (Nunan, 1988). The fact that students have many difficulties in comprehension the information due to unfamiliarity with the pronunciation of the target language and a lack of listening skill. Listening subject seems to be the most difficult in students learning process. For the third English major students at Tay Do University, they cannot avoid common problems relating to listening. When dealing with a listening lesson, they often experience a lack of background knowledge and cultural understanding, vocabulary, pronunciation etc. Besides, five periods of listening every week is not enough for students to be good listeners, they do not recognize their weak points in listening to English and know how to improve their listening skill. Therefore, they feel nervous when taking listening test or examination because they lack of time on their self-study. These are reasons why juniors majoring in English have got many difficulties in listening to English at university.

Consequently, the study “Difficulties in English listening of English Majored Juniors at Tay Do University” is to figure out the difficulties in English listening. Since then, some solutions were suggested to help students to improve their problems in listening subject. Then they can find the suitable solutions for this issue and enhance their listening skill.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Definition of listening**

Listening plays a vital role in daily life, people listen for different purposes like communication, information, academic purposes, entertainment and so on. “As for foreign language learning, listening is of paramount important since it provides the language input” (Rost, 1994). In addition, without listening skill, no communication can be achieved (Cross, 1998). Thomlison (1984) stated “Active listening which is very important for effective communication”. Actually, thanks to listening, people can understand what others are saying. People need to listen to others with eyes, ears and heart because listening in any language requires focus and attention. It is a skill that some people need to work at harder than others.

In studying English, listening subject seems to be the most difficult in learning process. Listening includes comprehension of meaning words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and connected discourse. Furthermore, listening is a creative skill. It means we comprehend the sound falling on our ears, and take the raw material of words, arrangements of words, and the rise and fall the voice, and from this material we creative a significance. Listening is to give people attention to something or someone who is making a sound, the purpose is people can understand what the person is trying to communicate. Goh (1999) said that “There are fewer insights about the process of listening and the

way it is learnt.” If students do not hear well, they will communicate or perhaps they cannot pass their listening examination. In addition, listening is an important part of the second language because “listening comprehension provides the right conditions for language skills” (Hansan, 2000). Although there are many various definitions of listening, listening is to understand as a complex process and the listeners have to guess the meaning from oral text and understand not only verbal but also non-verbal message of the speakers.

There are many definitions to show the listening process and the important of listening. Actually, listening must be combined with comprehension so that listeners can know what speakers convey. Listening without comprehension means the listening process is unsuccessful.

### **The importance of listening**

Listening skill plays a very important role in learning English, listening is also the most active communication in daily life. The fact that “Listening is the one of the most important communication skill that we can acquire. Listening is the primary way that we understand others, enrich our own lives, and learn important, often vital, information” (Judy et al 2008). Additionally, people can share feeling, emotions and everything in life. Furthermore, listening creates the relationship and enlarges the distance between people. As Nunan (1998) believed that, “Listening is the basic skill in language learning. Without listening skill, learners will never learn to communicate effectively.”

Moreover, Rost (1994) said that, “Even though person can have a good ability, he or she is not sure to be able to understand message, he or she needs some conscious actions to use this ability effectively in each listening situations.” Thus, listening is a difficult skill, especially in learning English, the communication is successful when people can listen and understand what speakers say. People acquired language by understanding the linguistic information they hear. Furthermore, listening comprehension takes a significant role in development of other skills in English. Listening is getting more and more important in many foreign languages and listeners effort on the development of other language skills.

Besides, Hasan (2000) pointed out, “Listening comprehension provides the right conditions for language acquisition and development of other language skills”. If students listen well, they can get a half of success in communication because listening comprehension consists of processing information which the listeners get from visual a auditory clues in order to define what is going on and what the speakers are trying to express. Students of English major must care this skill because it is an essential factor in language. Therefore, the success of listening depends on many elements. That is the reason why listening subject has a large importance in English learning process.

### **The difficulties in learning listening subject**

#### **Background knowledge**

Background knowledge is one of the difficulties that effects significantly on students’ listening comprehension. According to Vanniarajan (1990), “Background knowledge includes knowledge of target culture, knowledge of current affairs, art, politics and literature.” In class, most of listening materials are related to social topics and students rarely listen to these issues. However, in daily life,

they usually listen to normal topic such as life, family, society and so on. Therefore, students get obstacles with unfamiliar topics because they have little knowledge about different topics. In the listening material, the topic has a strong effect to listening comprehend. On the one hand, if the listener has the essential prior knowledge, understanding will be improved and enhanced. On the other hand, if the listener has no prior knowledge, he will have to make much effort to comprehend what he listens to.

In addition, Gebhard (2000) stated that, "Familiarity with the text makes listening easier for the listeners as he is able to relate to his own background knowledge." Many students do not have enough knowledge of the context to make sense. Therefore, they feel confused with new topics that are strange with their own experiences. Also, Osada (2004) said that, "The learners have to combine what they hear with they have already known." Some students cannot recognize words, phrases or terms which are unfamiliar to them because they rarely listen to these topics. Lack of background knowledge is an obstacle during the learning process. Anderson and Lynch (2000) mentioned that, "Lack of social-cultural, factual and contextual knowledge of the target language can also present an obstacle to comprehension because language is used to express culture."

Most of listening texts refer to social life. Thus, students should apply knowledge to succeed in learning listening subject. Background knowledge is always a challenge for students, especially in learning listening. To sum up, background knowledge takes a significant role in learning listening comprehension. Therefore, widening background knowledge is necessary for students.

## **Vocabulary**

Today, English becomes the common language but there are still many people studying this language impeded in vocabulary. When people first learn a new language, they are also like babies who start to learn their mother tongue. Thus, learning vocabulary is a very important part in the process of language learning in general and English particular because "without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed" (Thornbury, 2002). Learning vocabulary is one of the first steps of learning a second language, yet learners never finishes vocabulary acquisition. In fact, lack of vocabulary also makes students limit in learning listening. According to Azmi et al (2014), "Listening comprehension is the ability to recognize another through sense, aural organs and allocated a meaning to the message to understand it." It is hard to catch the meaning of sentence when lacking vocabulary. Therefore, lack of vocabulary causes difficulties in listening process, learners will not have enough vocabulary to listen well.

Vocabulary plays a key role in listening process because each listening comprehension dialogue, discourse is formed by the sentences while the sentences is the basic unit of word, phrase. Vocabulary knowledge is very complex and all words are not similar even one word can have many different meanings. Therefore, students cannot choose suitable words with the text when they listen. "Knowledge of the vocabulary used by the speaker is another quality for good listening comprehension, some words have many meaning when they are used in different contexts. Most students can only identify the most common meaning of a word. In order to become an effective learner, one must understand a broader range of vocabulary" (Samuels, 1984). Besides, when listening to a text, students even do not recognize some words they used to learn before. In addition,

some students do not recognize the most important words, that causes they do not understand the text. As Underwood (1989) pointed that, "For students listening to a foreign language, it is certain that they cannot know all words in the speech like mother tongue. Therefore, when they hear an unknown word which can be like a suddenly dropped barrier, they may stop and think about the meaning of word." With this reason, a good listener is a person who can understand total of the listening text.

Vocabulary is a process requiring great patience persistence of learners especially for foreign language learners.

### **Pronunciation and accents**

Pronunciation also has a significant influence on listening process, it is one of the factors affecting listening skill of students. Yates (2001) expressed that, "Pronunciation relates to the generation of sounds that are used to form meaning." With the same point, Hismanoglu (2016) stated that, "Pronunciation is significant as it is a section of successful oral production or communicative competence." Listening requires students not only to remember words but also to know how to pronounce. If students do not know the pronunciation of vocabulary, they cannot recognize it even familiar words when listening. Therefore, "If the listeners learn to pronounce the sound accurately himself, it will be much easier for him to hear them correctly when being said by someone else." (Ur, 1984). In contrast, incorrect pronunciation makes the learners are not able to distinguish and realize the familiar word even simplest word in communication. In fact, pronunciation is one of the most difficult problems students majoring in English face because it affects their speaking and listening ability directly. Difficulties in pronunciation such as intonation, stress, linking, vowels, consonants.

In addition, Munro and Derwing (1999) stated that, "Too many accented speeches can lead to an important reduction in comprehension." Also Goh (1999) said, "66% of listeners referred a speakers' accents as one of the most important factors that impact on listening comprehension." Unfamiliar accents of both native and non-native can cause serious problems in listening comprehension. This will interrupt the whole listening comprehension process and at the same time an unfamiliar accent makes comprehension impossible for listeners. It is hard to communicate in English because students do not catch what the speakers are saying.

Besides, pronunciation practice in class has a little effect on the learner's pronunciation skill. For that reason, the learners need to develop awareness and monitoring skill that will allow learning opportunities outside the classroom environment. In shorts, pronunciation plays an important role in listening, without it learners have many difficulties in getting their speech understand and understanding others. Besides, accent also plays vital role in listening process. In the case of English, there are different from British English, Australians, Japanese, French and so on. In addition, accents not only vary according to geographical regions but also according to social groups. It is very normal for different groups of language users to pronounce language in characteristic ways and everyone has an accent. Therefore, when learners hear a new accent for the first time, they may not understand it very well. This can cause problems and may disrupt the whole comprehension process. An unfamiliar accent can make comprehension almost impossible for listener. These reasons leads to difficult in listening subject of students.



## **Psychological obstacles**

Psychological obstacles such as lack of confidence, anxiety, mental block and so on not only cause difficulties in speaking but also affect English listening. Psychological elements are crucial to listening learning. According to Wheelless (1975), "The fear of misinterpreting, inadequately processing, and/or not being able to adjust psychologically to messages sent by others." Learners cannot neglect the existence of being afraid and have a great tension when they think of a foreign language. Listening ability of students is also limited by long listening texts especially lectures. When the lectures are too long, students must suffer to remember a huge amount of information, it is difficult to them. Hasan (2000) also agreed that, "The length of time students listen may cause memory problems or even fatigue and this would distract listeners' attention from grasping the meaning of the text when there is a lapse in concentration." Students often misunderstand words because they hear them wrong. As Eysenck (1979) suggested that, "Worry wastes energy that should be used for memory and processing on a type of thinking which in no way facilitates the task at hand." Sometimes, learners forget what they hear because of nervousness. Moreover, Young (1990) recommended that, "In most of literature on language learning anxiety, students have reported that listening in the foreign language produces the most anxiety."

In addition, students often get tired when they listen to the texts because they do not understand the contents or the lectures are too long, they would be under pressure. Besides, many students are not interested in learning listening subject because they think that it is so difficult and they are not confident to learn. Actually, self-confidence also plays a vital role in listening English. Besides, self-confidence is the psychological foundation on the way to success, it is more necessary to have it in learning a foreign language. When students lack of confidence, they always think that their own ability cannot understand and hear English well. In addition, some students lack of concentration when listening because they distracted by the noise around. The background noise causes students lack of concentration; they cannot get clearly information from the listening. Besides, when students are in bad mood, they cannot concentrate to the listening and cannot grasp the gist of the listening. Thus, they can hardly grasp the main ideas of listening because they do not know where that information is important to hear in all. From these above, psychological barriers really have negative effects on learning listening. It is like a wall in learning in listening process of students.

## **RESEARCH AIM, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESIS**

### **Research Aim**

The research aim was to investigate the difficulties in English listening of majored juniors at Tay Do University and their attitudes toward listening subject. In addition, this study was expected that students could recognize their difficulties and find out helpful ways for themselves as well as learners who study English as a second language to overcome difficulties in listening to English.

### **Research question**

The study was undertaken with the purposes of dealing with the research question:

What are some difficulties that English majored juniors often face in listening subject?

## Hypothesis

According to the literature review and the research question, it was hypothesized that English majored juniors would be aware of their difficulties in listening to English. Moreover, they would recognize the factors that influenced on their listening ability and would have suitable solutions to solve their problems in listening to English.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Design

A survey research was conducted to answer the research questions and to test the hypothesis. Participants were the nuclear of the research. They were fifty English majored juniors at Tay Do University. Questionnaire was delivered to juniors majoring in English to collect information about difficulties in listening to English. This study pointed out the value attitudes of participants toward listening subject.

### Participant

The participants were 50 juniors in Bachelor of English classes at Tay Do University. There were 43 females and 7 males. Their age ranged from 21 to 24. They spoke Vietnamese as their mother tongue and English was considered as their foreign language. All of them had learnt English listening skills at Tay Do University for three years, so it was confirmed that they encountered lots of difficulties with learning listening.

### Instrument

Questionnaire was used to figure out the difficulties in English listening of English majored juniors and to find out causes of these difficulties. The questionnaire consisted of sixteen questions. The questionnaire was designed based on practical difficulties of students. The following was a brief description of the questionnaire. All questions were investigated to get students' background, the attitude toward English subject, the difficulties in learning English listening subject and the causes of these difficulties.

**Table 1: The gist of questionnaire**

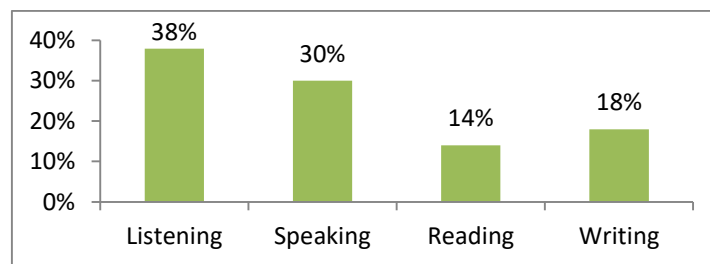
Question/Statement	Summary of the question's/statement's content
From 1 to 7	Students' background
From 8 to 12	Difficulties in listening process
Question 13	Ways to improve listening skill

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the questionnaire to English majored juniors, a lot of useful and reliable data related to their difficulties were collected. Through the questionnaires, it could be synthesized participants' information more accurately. Due to analyzing and valuating the data from questionnaire, the results and discussion would be displayed as follow.

### Students' background

#### Students' opinion about the most difficult skill in four skills



**Figure 1: Students' opinion about the most difficult skill in four skills**

The figure represented the participants' opinion about four main skills of English. The result showed that listening was the most difficult skill to students because it accounted for the most percentage of those skills (38%). When they learnt at high school many teachers focused more on grammar structure than other skills. Hence, they often met problems in listening such as background knowledge, vocabulary, pronunciation and accents, psychological obstacles. When dealing with a listening lesson, they often lacked of background knowledge, the listening had many different topics and they were strange to students because they included words, phrases or terms which were unfamiliar to students.

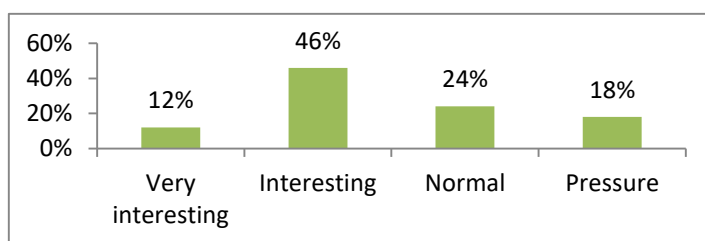
Besides, some new words in the lectures also affected listening ability of English majored juniors because they did not have a lot of vocabulary. Moreover, there were many words in the speech that students did not know the meaning. Some students thought that listening was the most difficult subject because of pronunciation, students did know the pronunciation of words so they could not recognize the words while listening. In addition, foreigners' accent caused obstacles in English listening, foreigners' accent was unfamiliar to students and they spoke too fast to catch up. Psychological obstacles also influenced on the listening ability, students did not feel well or were anxious or worried about the listening tasks, they might not perform well. Therefore, listening was considered as the most difficult and challenge subject among the language subjects in English.

According to the figure above, there was 30% of the students choosing speaking. They could understand what the speakers said but they could not communicate well. The percentage of the writing was 18%. Students could not express their ideas because of lacking vocabulary. On the other



hand, they knew many words but they lack of ideas. Reading represented the lowest percentage of four skills (14%). Students faced many difficulties in reading because they did not have reading strategies.

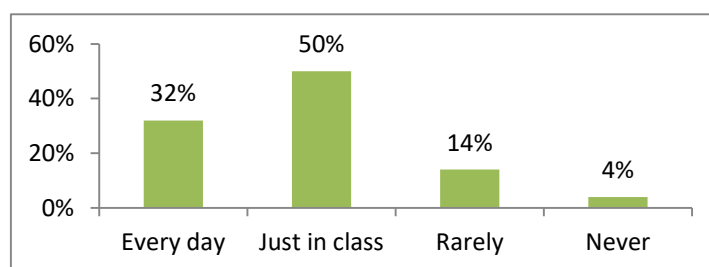
### Students' feeling toward studying listening subject



**Figure 2: Students' feeling toward studying listening subject**

The figure showed the participants' feeling toward studying listening subject. Almost students thought that listening was an interesting subject. In fact, 48% of participants agreed that listening was interesting and 12% thought that listening was very interesting. Listening materials had a lot of topics, students could listen about social life, cultures, entertainment and so on. Thanks to these, they could be interested in getting information and upgrading their knowledge. Besides, the speakers had many accents, students could learn their accents and practice. While 24% felt normal when they learnt listening subject, and 18% felt pressure. Actually, when students learnt listening subject, they sometimes were affected by psychology. They felt anxiety because they had bad listening ability. They often studied listening subject in pressure because they could not get information from the speakers.

### Students' practicing English listening



**Figure 3: Students' practicing English listening**

Although the students recognized the importance of listening subject in English, they did not spend much time on practicing listening. The figure represented the students' practicing English listening. Listening was a hard subject, students usually practiced listening in class where there was teachers' instruction more than at home. In addition, students usually got difficulties such as vocabulary, pronunciation, background and so on. Therefore, listening took a long time with high frequency of practicing to improve listening skill. However, the students' practicing English listening was not enough to improve their listening skill. There were 32% students who practiced listening every day,

wherever they can, maybe they felt the time for listening only in class was not enough, they could enhance their own listening skill outside classroom. Besides, 50% students practiced listening in class. If students only waited for the listening that their teachers delivered to practice in class, they would never succeed in learning listening process. However, there were 14% students who rarely practiced listening even there were 4% did not practice listening at all. Hence, juniors got difficulties in listening because of lacking of practicing.

### Students' self-evaluation on listening ability

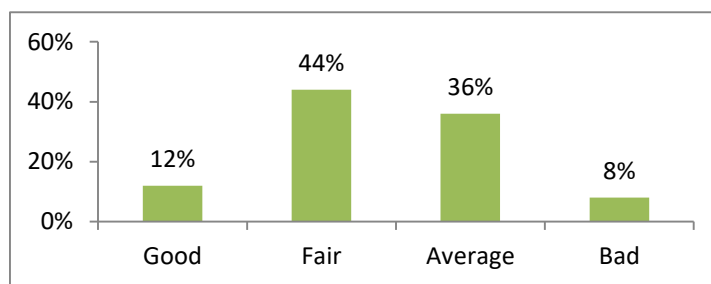


Figure 4: Students' self-evaluation on listening ability

These were reason why participants had no excellent ability in listening English. In this study, some students have studied English for a long time. Thus, 12% had good listening ability. However, the amount of participants had fair listening ability were 44%. In addition, the percentages of students had average listening ability were 36%, and students who were bad at listening was 8%. When the students recognized the importance of listening in English, they needed to practice listening more and more to improve it. However, the number of students who practiced listening skill was few. Therefore, lack of practicing maybe a negative aspect that caused many disadvantages for listening.

### Students' favorite topics in listening

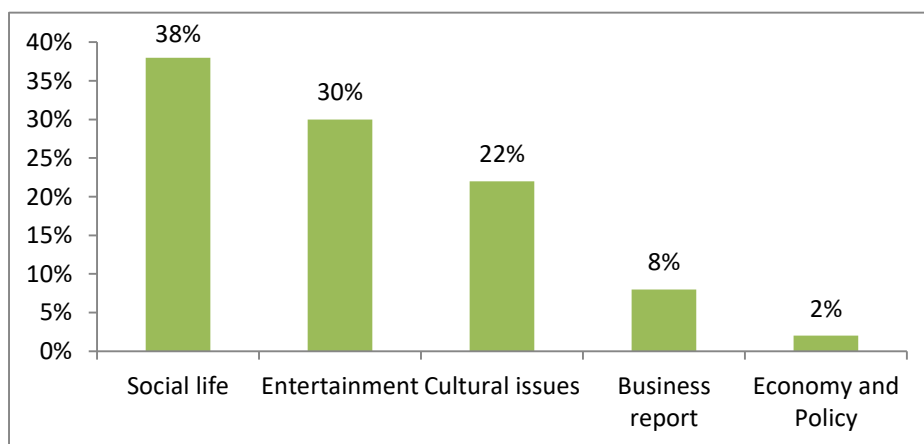
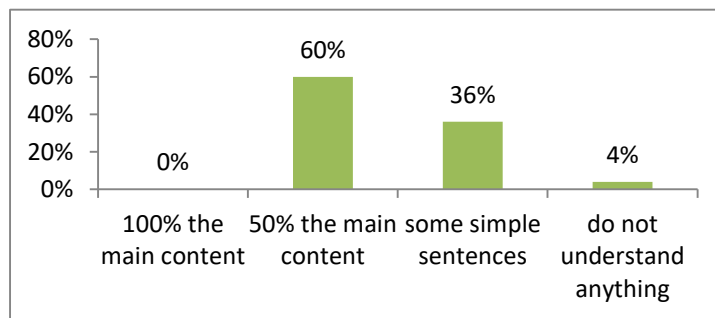


Figure 5: Students' favorite topics in listening

The figure showed participants' attitude toward topics in listening. Students were usually interested in topics such as social life, entertainment because it was easy for students to listen. Especially, they were related to their life. In fact, 38% of participants who interested in social life listening and 30% chose entertainment topic to listen. Besides, 22% of participants who were interested in cultural issues topic. To succeed in listening subject, students should apply knowledge about culture because learning a new language was considered as learning a new culture. Through the language students could understand people who spoke that language. In addition, 8% liked listening to business report topic and 2% were interested in economy and policy. These topics included different words and that students rarely listened to, so they would feel difficult when listening to English.

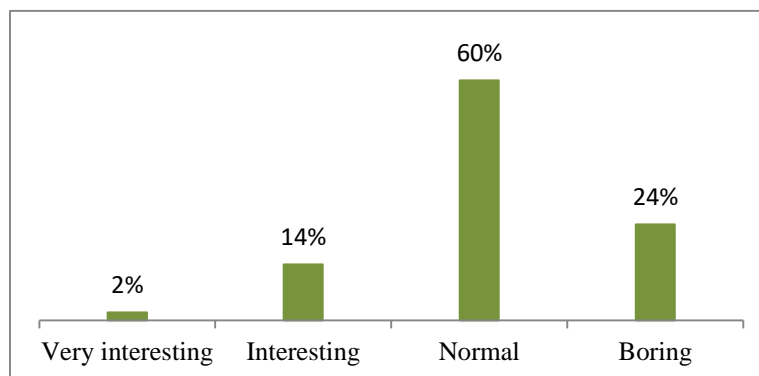
### Students' understanding degree in English listening



**Figure 6: Students' understanding degree in English listening**

Figure 6 represented the understanding degree of participants in English listening. 60% of participants who understood 50% of the main content and no one could understand completely the main contents, it showed that the participants' listening ability was still limited. 36% only understood some simple sentences when they listened. The content of listening was various and complex, simple sentences rarely expressed information fully. For this reason, students could not succeed in listening. Besides, 4% did not understand anything. Actually, English majored juniors still met many difficulties in listening process. Thus, students needed to improve their listening ability.

### Students' attitude toward long lectures in English listening

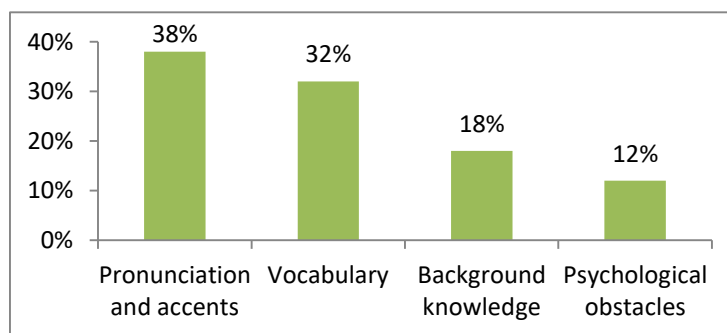


**Figure 7: Students' attitude toward long lectures in English listening**

Only 2% of participants thought that long lectures were very interesting. On the other hand, 24% felt bored when listening to long lectures because lectures normally were speeches and they were presented by one person. Especially, the lectures had a lot of information that students had to listen and sometimes they felt stressed when listening to long lectures in more than 5 minutes. For that reason, long lectures were not interesting. However, there was 14% thought that long lectures were interesting. In long lectures often had a lot of information, speakers also used intonation or marker words to get the main ideas. Hence, students could recognize the main content of the lectures. 60% had no idea with long lectures. They felt normal when listening to long lectures.

### The difficulties of participants in listening to English

As mentioned above, listening subject seems to be a difficult subject for almost of the students. Furthermore, lack of the time practicing listening is also obstacle to listen effectively. Besides, there were some common difficulties that many students often faced in listening.



**Figure 8: The difficulties in listening process**

This figure represented the difficulties of participants in learning English listening. Actually, these factors caused many problems in learning process of participants. All participants agreed that they had difficulties in listening to English because all of them checked “yes” for these elements.

Pronunciation took the highest percentage. 38% of participants who got difficult with pronunciation and accents. Pronunciation is one of the basic factors affecting listening skill of students. Students could not recognize pronunciation of words even familiar words when listening. Besides, they did not distinguish the pronunciation of words because sometimes the words had the same pronunciation. Thus, students could not catch up with what the speakers were saying. In addition, students listened from different accents such as British, French, German and so on. Therefore, students did not understand when they listened for the first time, they could not ask for repeat many times to get information. Especially, some students did not know how to pronounce the words, it was difficult for them to listen the texts because if students did not know how to pronounce words, they would not listen to them easily.

The second difficulty was vocabulary. 32% of juniors majoring in English admitted that vocabulary made them feel difficult in learning English listening subject. In fact, the importance of vocabulary in English listening cannot be denied. However, some students still got difficult with vocabulary because they did not know a lot of vocabulary, this was the reason why they felt difficult to listen the

texts. Besides, the speakers spoke too fast so students could not hear or students knew the words but they did not know the pronunciation of the words. In addition, some students did not recognize the most important words so they could not get easily main ideas in listening. Students could not choose suitable words because the words had different meaning when used in the listening. Thus, students got difficult to choose words, they did not deduce the gist of the words.

The next problem was background knowledge. Background knowledge was one of the most important parts in English listening. Students could not succeed in learning listening subject without background knowledge because it was condition to help students comprehend what speakers said. In fact, 18% of participants got difficult in listening subject because of background knowledge. Topics had a lot of information about social life, economy, education, technology and other social problems. Therefore, if students had little knowledge about different topics, they would not make sense the contexts. Moreover, some topics might include words, phrases or terms which were unfamiliar to learners. They were totally strange to students so it was such a hard work to listen when the message was full of terminology.

The lowest percentage was psychological obstacle. 12% of participants who got difficult with some psychological obstacles when learning listening subject. Psychological elements are important in learning process because they strongly affect to listening ability of juniors. Some students got problems with lectures. In fact, students were easy to be stressed or get tired when listening to long lectures because they suffered to remember a huge amount of information and they would be under pressure. Besides, some students were not confident in listening to English because they were afraid of misunderstanding. Juniors could not understand the meanings of the materials after playing the tape for two times in class.

Therefore, the students might gradually lose their self-confidence. They were afraid of listening to English when they were face with listening materials. From these above, they had little confidence in their comprehension abilities. Moreover, students lacked concentration when listening because they were distracted by the noise around or they were in bad mood. Hence, they could not concentrate in listening to English. There were psychological obstacles that made students fail in listening process. These limited their listening ability.

Let's find more details about each problem.

**Table 2: Problems in pronunciation and accents**

What are pronunciation problems you get in listening?	Percentage
Do not know pronunciation of vocabulary	18%
Cannot recognize pronunciation of familiar words easily	20%
Cannot distinguish words that are pronounced almost the same	34%
Cannot understand the context, when hearing a new accent	28%



In figure 8, problems in pronunciation and accents accounted for 38%. Table 2 represented more detail about these difficulties. In fact, 34% of participants who did not distinguish words that were pronounced almost the same. Some words have different meaning but they have the same pronunciation. Hence, it was difficult for students to choose suitable in the listening. In addition, 28% did not understand the context when hearing a new accent. Accents affected students' listening because they mainly listened to their teachers, but the speakers in the listening usually had many different accents so students seemed not to be accustomed to these accents. That was the reason why it was hard to catch up strange accents. Also, 20% did not recognize pronunciation of familiar words easily and 18% of participants who did not know pronunciation of vocabulary. Only knowing about the meaning of vocabulary is not enough to listen to English. If students knew a large sum of vocabulary but they did not remember the ways how to pronounce them exactly, their vocabulary could become meaningless in English listening.

**Table 3: Problems in vocabulary**

What are vocabulary problems you usually meet in listening?	Percentage
Do not recognize the words that you used to learn before	22%
Do not know a lot of vocabulary	34%
Do not recognize the most important words	18%
Cannot choose suitable words because they have different meaning	26%

In figure 8, problems in vocabulary accounted for 32%. Table 3 showed the detail in difficulties of participants in vocabulary. 34% did not know a lot of vocabulary. Vocabulary is an effective factor that helps students succeed in listening process more rapidly. 26% could not choose suitable words for the listening because they had different meaning. One word can have many meaning so students got difficult to distinguish and choose suitable words to get the main ideas in the listening. Besides, 22% did not recognize the words that they used to learn before because when they learnt the words, they did not practice the pronunciation of the words. 18% did not recognize the most words. Students did not recognize the most important words; they would not get easily the main ideas in the listening.

**Table 4: Problems in background knowledge**

What are background knowledge problems you meet in listening?	Percentage
Have little knowledge about different topics	32%
Do not have enough knowledge of the context to make sense	28%
Cannot recognize the familiar words, phrases or terms	16%
Cannot follow the unfamiliar topics	24%

In figure 8, problems in background knowledge accounted for 18%. Table 4 represented the detail difficulties of participants. 16% did not recognize the words, phrases or terms in unfamiliar topics. The texts included many topics such as economy, education, culture, politic and so on. Thus, if students rarely listened to them, they would not understand or recognize the words, phrases or terms when listening to these topics. 32% got difficult with having little knowledge about different topics. Learners spent little time to upgrade their knowledge. Having knowledge is also an advantage of students. Besides, 28% did have enough knowledge of the context to make sense and 24% of participants who listened to topics that they rarely listened. They would feel strange when listening to unfamiliar topics. Therefore, juniors could not focus on the listening and take the main ideas.

**Table 5: Problems in psychological obstacles**

What are psychological obstacles you face in listening skill?	Percentage
Lack listening stamina/ get tired	36%
Have a mental block	6%
Distract by background noise	32%
Have hearing problems	4%
Lack self-confidence	22%

In figure 8, problems in psychological obstacles accounted for 12%. Table 5 showed the difficulties of participants in psychological obstacles. 36% got tired or lacked listening stamina. Almost listening materials for juniors were lectures so they always felt tired because the lectures had a lot of information to remember. 32% got difficult with background noise. When listening to the lectures, students needed to pay attention to get information. However, if the background was noisy, they lacked concentration for the listening. Especially, they could not listen at all. Only 4% had hearing problems and 6% had a mental block. Maybe some students got tinnitus so they could not hear well. Besides, 22% lacked self-confidence. Some students thought that they had bad listening ability in the class therefore they rarely volunteered to express their answers in listening tasks because they did not have confidence about themselves. They thought that their friends would laugh at them when they had wrong answer. In addition, if they were in bad mood, they would not listen well. This was the reason why they always thought uncomfortable and worried when learning listening subject.

## Ways to improve listening skill

**Table 6: Ways to improve listening skill**

<b>Students' practicing ways</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Listening to tapes/CDs of English lessons	30%
Communicating with foreigners	6%
Watching films on foreign channels	34%
Practicing speaking English with the others	18%
Practicing listening on the Internet	12%

The table showed the ways students practicing English listening. 34% chose practicing listening by watching films on foreign channels. Students could learn a lot of vocabulary in practical life by English subtitles. Besides, they could listen to simple sentences in films, when they did not recognize the sentences, they could listen again or see subtitles. There were 30% of participants listening to the tapes/CDs of English lessons to practice listening. Topics in tapes/CDs of English lessons were accustomed to listening habit of students and they were easy to listen. If they did not listen to the words that they could not recognize in class, they would listen to these topics a few times again at home. Besides, 18% practiced by speaking English with the others. Students felt comfortable when speaking to their friends because they could correct their mistakes each other. 12% of participants practicing English listening on the Internet. Some English texts online helped students check their level. However, on the Internet, there were many websites, students had to choose suitable websites to learn. The lowest percentage of result represented another idea for practicing listening subject; 6% practiced English listening through communicating with foreigners. That was a good chance for students when communicating with foreigners. However, some students were shy and nervous, they could not communicate with them.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGESSTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

### Conclusion

If a person wants to get achievement, he has to know clearly about himself first. Thus, to have success in learning English listening, students have to know about their difficulties in listening process. The study figured out some most common factors that had strongly effects on English listening of the participants. They were background knowledge, vocabulary, pronunciation and accents, and psychological obstacles. Background knowledge was an essential factor in listening process. When lacking of background knowledge, juniors would feel confused with unfamiliar topics that was strange to them. Besides, vocabulary also had some bad effects on listening skill of participants. Juniors could not listen well because of lacking of vocabulary.

Moreover, juniors got difficulties in listening when they did not recognize or know pronunciation of words. Hence, they could not focus on the listening text. Accents also affected to juniors' listening, it was difficult for juniors to comprehend when listening to unfamiliar accents. In addition, psychological obstacles would cause big problems in learning English listening subject. Students could not listen well if they had bad feeling or they lacked self-confidence. Juniors required their efforts a lot to improve their listening skill because of the time for them to practice listening to English in class was not much. Students should practice English listening at home as much as possible.

Juniors should read books or magazine to enlarge background knowledge. Besides, students could learn vocabulary by reading English books, students should learn sentence not only learn single words. When learning new words, students should pay attention to pronunciation of these words. Especially, juniors should acquire an adequate number of words and should know how to use them accurately. Master of vocabulary will be useful for listening process. In addition, students could practice English listening to improve listening ability by materials such as listening to tapes/CDs of English lesson, communicating with foreigners, watching films on foreign channels, practicing speaking English with the others, practicing listening to English on the Internet and so on because they had many different kinds of accents. Hence, students did not feel difficulty in listening English.

Moreover, students also kept clean mind when doing listening tasks. Students should choose the most suitable way to apply. Students should have reasonable schedules for practicing English listening. Students could follow regularly their listening schedules, then they would have good results in learning English listening subject. In generally, figuring out the difficulties in English listening was very necessary and helpful for English majored juniors. If they recognized exactly their difficulties in English listening, they could find out some suitable resolutions to improve their listening skill.

### **Suggestions for further research**

This study investigated about the difficulties in English listening of English majored juniors at Tay Do University. It was limited because of only for juniors. Therefore, the other researches are needed to investigate difficulties of English majored freshmen, sophomore at Tay Do University as well as in other universities.

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