
ANXIETY IN ENGLISH LISTENING COMPREHENSION EXPERIENCED BY FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS AT INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL, VIETNAM NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

Language learners rely on listening comprehension to not only understand second language (L2) speakers but also to comprehend a variety of L2 multimedia and publications. Meanwhile, listening is critical in the development of second language acquisition (SLA) (Goh and Vandergrift, 2021). However, due to various factors related to the test style, listening skills in Vietnam high schools have received insufficient emphasis. As a result, students may not have many opportunities to practice listening and develop effective listening methods, which can lead to a variety of challenges when joining a university fully taught in English like International School, Vietnam National University. Students face numerous challenges when learning this subject due to heightened expectations from lecturers and tight course requirements. Furthermore, in order to achieve B2 level by the end of the first year, many students are concerned with English listening comprehension, which they must study during that year. This study used questionnaires and interviews methods to examine the situation, determine the major reasons of worry among first-year students when listening, and offer ideas to assist them overcome their nervousness.

Keywords: *anxiety, listening comprehension*

INTRODUCTION

Given the importance of English in today's increasingly globalized society, the need to improve foreign or second language (L2) listening has gained widespread attention. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the importance of listening has been heavily highlighted (Vandergrift and Goh, 2012; Goh and Vandergrift, 2021). Listening is regarded as an extremely crucial skill for pupils to develop. The fact that students invest the majority of their time in class listening to what their lecturers say, such as giving lectures, inquiring, and so on, supports this theory. "The students are supposed to listen twice as much as they speak, four times more than they read, and five times more than they write," Celce-Murcia writes in Yusnida, Muslem, and Manan (2017, p. 440). This demonstrates that, in actuality, listening is more crucial than other abilities, as evidenced by the frequency with which pupils use it in comparison to other talents.

Despite its importance, teachers and students in Vietnam's high schools have not given sufficient attention to listening because of the following reasons. First and foremost, high school assessments and university admission exams do not include a listening component; as a result, teachers and students generally dismiss listening as a minor talent. Instead of spending time practicing listening, high school pupils focus solely on grammar, vocabulary, and reading for the purposes of exams. Furthermore, despite being covered in textbooks, listening is frequently neglected in courses due to time constraints and limited resources (cited in Dao Thi Lan Trang 2010, p1). As a consequence, high school students may be deficient in effective listening practices, leading to poor listening capabilities.

Elkhafaifi (2005), Bekleyen (2009), Dao Thi Lan Trang (2010), Fang Xu (2011), Amini Naghadeh and others have conducted study on learners' fear of listening both outside and inside Vietnam (2013). However, the researcher discovered that there has been little research on the subject in the context of first-year students at IS, VNU, particularly in their English listening comprehension. As a result, this topic becomes more deserving of investigation. Furthermore, it can be used as a starting point for further inquiry into this and similar issues.

The study will, first and foremost, provide readers with an overview of beliefs about anxiety and learning to listen to a foreign language. The researcher then aims to take a deeper look at how IS first-year students are learning to listen in English classes. Following that, the research uncovers the primary sources of students' anxiousness during learning English listening. Last but not least, the study tries to provide some potential ways to assist students in reducing their anxiety when studying English through listening.

Anxiety and language anxiety

Humans experience anxiety on a regular basis. Anxiety is defined as "tension, apprehension, uneasiness, and worry associated to an activation of the autonomic nervous system," according to Horwitz and Serraj (2015, p. 1). When someone feels anxious, their nervous system is overworked, resulting in a sense of tension, agitation, and worry.

Furthermore, language anxiety is a fear that arises during the process of learning a new language. Language anxiety is a "psychological construct particular to language learning and can be characterized as a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process," according to Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) in Lababidi (2016, p. 185). Language anxiety, according to some researchers, occurs when language learners experience fear when performing in a second or foreign language (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope 1986; Macintyre & Gardner, 1993, in Zhai, 2015, p. 40).

Musa, Hashim, Muhamad, and Mohamed (2013, p. 326) identify three major categories: Communication apprehension, test anxiety, and dread of unfavourable outcomes are all examples of language anxiety. They claimed that learners' apprehension about communicating is linked to their uncertainties and fears. They define test anxiety as a dread of failing in a test. Likewise, learners' perceptions of teachers' and friends' judgements of their language are characterised as fear of unfavourable evaluation. As a result, it can be deduced that language anxiety plays a vital role in students having difficulty understanding the lesson, as stated by MacIntyre & Gardner in Wang (2019, p. 121), "anxiety in particular interferes with mental thinking and cognitive behaviours, resulting in less effective learning performances."

Listening anxiety

Listening anxiety is a way of explaining an issue that prevents kids from getting the best possible comprehension from their listening. When a student has listening anxiety, he or she will have an unanticipated reaction to a task, such as being unable to complete it or even hearing the audio adequately. Listening anxiety, according to Tahsildar and Yusoff (2014, p. 44), is "the psychological response of a person to a listening task, which is determined by the effect of feelings, beliefs, and behaviours." Listening anxiety is defined as "the dread of the listener misinterpreting, insufficiently digesting, or not being able to adjust psychologically to messages communicated by others," according to Wheels, 1975, in Zhai (2015, p. 41). Feelings, beliefs, and behaviours all have an impact on students' listening anxiety because they might make them fearful of undertaking listening activities.

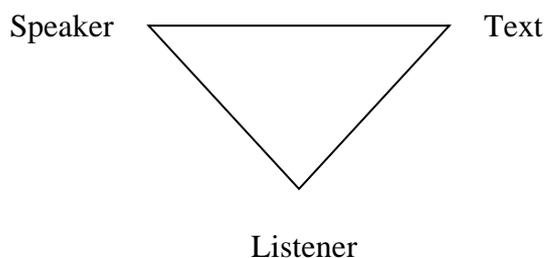
According to Zhai, there are several basic causes of listening anxiety (2015). The first is a lack of self-assurance. The more self-assured someone is, the more likely they are to profit from listening class. Students, according to Zhai (2015, p. 43), are apprehensive about listening comprehension as they lack confidence and understanding about listening activities when they first start college.

The lack of listening strategies is the second root of listening anxiety. Listening is a challenging skill to master, particularly for foreign language learners. As a result, techniques are essential for gaining the best understanding of it. Foreign language students, on the other hand, appear to be lacking in listening strategies that should be taught by lecturers.

The qualities of listening comprehension are the third source of listening anxiety. Listeners are unable to go back and repeat what has been stated due to the intricate process that occurs in a short period of time. Listeners must grasp the core message of the speech in order to understand it, but when they miss one point, they frequently pause to consider what they missed. As a result, this aspect of listening comprehension appears to make listeners nervous.

Qualities of listening resources are the fourth source of listening stress. In his research, Zhai (2015) discovered that the speed with which messages are delivered causes anxiety. Additionally, he noted that students have a hard time to listen to varied accents or lengthy contents since they are prone to missing vital information, which causes them anxiety.

As a result, the researcher creates the diagram below to represent the study question's conceptual framework of main causes for the anxiety in English listening comprehension experienced by first-year students at IS, VNU.



The researcher discovers the differences after thoroughly reading several previous related studies. The study of Iranian students (2013) focuses on the link as well as the effects of anxiety on listening comprehension, which is not the focus of this study and hence should be discounted. The first study, Dao Thi Lan Trang (2010), and the second study, Fang Xu (2011), both explore the causes of students' anxiety in listening comprehension and offer solutions to assist them overcome it, according to the researcher. These two studies, however, have variances in the categories of key reasons. Furthermore, they have left out teacher suggestions for assisting kids in reducing their anxiousness. As far as the researcher can tell, there hasn't been little research done on the same topic with first-year students in the field of English. As a result, this study should be used to delve deeper into the students' perceptions of their anxiety in English LC, as well as their learning preferences and remedies given by teachers and other studies.

Research questions

1. Do the first-year IS students think that they are suffering from listening anxiety in English?
2. What are the main causes of English listening anxiety experienced by first-year students as perceived by students and teachers?

3. From the students' perspective, what are their preferences in learning English listening to overcome their anxiety?

4. From the teachers' perspective, what are the possible solutions in teaching and learning English listening to help reduce students' anxiety?

METHODOLOGY

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

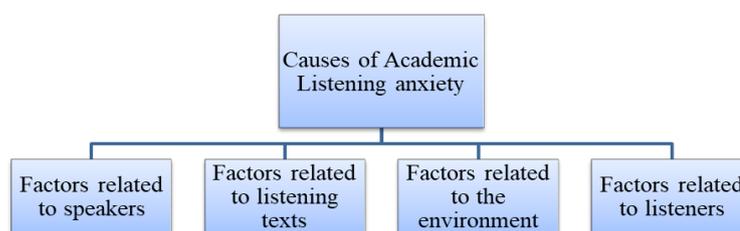
For the purpose is to investigate listening anxiety among first-year students in IS, VNU, 100 students and 3 teachers who are lecturing English listening skills from 3 different classes were selected as research participants through random sampling.

Those students all passed the entrance examination to IS, VNU and are currently in the second semester of their first Academic year at this college and all involved in the same level 4 (B2). Course books are theme-based designed and B2 outcome task oriented. Every unit has a pre-listening exercise, which is normally a vocabulary exercise to help students prepare before lesson, a post-listening exercise to help students practice listening or speaking after lessons together with listening practice test to obtain the goal. Lecturers involved in this study are all non-native teachers with at least 5 years of teaching General English classes, who have got countless experience in dealing with first-year students.

Design of the Study

The researcher employed questionnaires and interviews to increase the study's reliability and validity as according to Gillham (2000), Dornyei and Taguchi (2002), Mackey and Gass (2005), and other research, the following are the most commonly agreed-on benefits of using questionnaires: It's simple to develop and collect massive volumes of data from a large number of people, saving time and money while also processing the data fast and easily (cited in Nguyen Phuong Nhung 2013).

The researcher developed the conceptual framework for the study topic based on the literature review and previous studies review: "What are the main causes of students' anxiety in English listening comprehension?". The conceptual framework is presented in the figure below, which will be used as a base for researcher to build up the questionnaire items:



To be more specific, the questionnaire designed by the researcher with the help of supervisor for first-year students were all written in English using simple language so all students can have no difficulties in understanding. Each item of the questionnaire served to answer particular research questions. The first item in form of Yes/No question helped to seek the answer to the first research questions-the situation of experiencing listening anxiety among students. Afterwards, students having the answer Yes could move on to answer 30 next items for the second and third research questions. To be more particularly, items from 1-20 scored on a five-point Likert response scale with the adaptation from Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale developed by Elkhafai (2005), ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

agree), which aimed to find the answer for the causes of listening anxiety. Items from 21-30 also scored on a five-point Likert response scale ranging from 1 (totally ineffective) to 4 (very effective) and column 5 for other ideas, which seek to find possible solutions from students' perspectives. Those who have the answer No would be excluded from the study but the researcher hoped that they could share useful information to help their friends so there would be 2 open questions (items 31-32) for them to answer.

Interviews were incorporated into this study by the researcher in order to get additional particular information to augment the data obtained from the questionnaires. McNamara (1999) claims that interviews are especially useful for obtaining the story behind a participant's experiences since the interviewer can delve further into the subject (cited in Nguyen Thi Giang 2014).

The goal of the interviews in this study was to get insight into the topic under investigation. The interviews with teachers aimed to provide more in-depth information about the main causes of listening anxiety and, more importantly, to respond to the fourth research question, which was about potential answers in teaching and learning English listening to help students overcome their anxiety as perceived by teachers. As a result, each interview was semi-structured, with two open-ended English questions.

Data collection & analysis

The questionnaires were distributed to students in three groups in the first phase after adequate time had been set aside. The researcher began by outlining the study, its purpose, and the value of participants' participation in the study. The researcher then introduced the surveys and instructed students on how to fill them out. If the students had any questions about the surveys, they were given the opportunity to ask them. The researcher then distributed and collected the surveys on the same days.

The researcher conducted the second phase with three professors from those three courses. The interviewer contacted the interviewees by phone. Once authorization was received, appointments were scheduled. The researcher provided a quick explanation of the researcher and the research, as well as the aim of the interview, emphasizing the importance of the interviewees' responses to the questions on the day of the interview. The researcher also guaranteed that interviewees' attendance and responses were kept confidential. The interviewer kept the order of the questions, provided a casual and friendly atmosphere, and encouraged the interviewees to answer. If further information is required, additional questions could be added on a regular basis. The researcher took meticulous notes and recorded the comments of the interviews with a tape recorder.

The data collected from both instruments, such as questionnaires and interviews, was categorized to answer four study questions. To be more specific, questionnaire data will answer the first, second, and third research questions, whereas interviews will specifically address the fourth question and provide more in-depth information for the second question. Because the results will be displayed as bar charts and tables for each discrete category, qualitative methodologies are utilized to examine the data.

A qualitative method was used to analysed the students' responses. The "Yes or No" response on the first item was transformed to a percentage to answer the first research question. The data from items 1 to 30 was then transformed into a percentage in response to the second and third questions, allowing the researcher to discover the distribution of key reasons for listening anxiety and viable solutions from the students' perspective. For effective analysis and comparison, tables and bar charts were employed to adequately display the data.

The researcher took 4-5 days after questioning the respondents to go over the meeting notes and listen to the recording again in order to get more accurate information. After that, the data from the interviews was analysed by summarizing, clarifying, and comparing it to the questionnaire replies. These discoveries generated key quotations to support the survey data, leading in more comprehensive and accurate findings and debate.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ABOUT THEIR ANXIETY WHEN LEARNING ENGLISH LISTENING

As collected from questionnaires, all 100 students answer Yes for the first question: "Do you think that you are suffering from English listening anxiety?". This reflects that most of the participants are not confident with their English listening skills. Hence, anxiety in listening is a severe problem among these students. Attention should be paid more to investigate the causes as well as possible solutions to help students overcome their anxiety and become more confident with this important skill when learning English.

MAIN CAUSES OF ANXIETY IN ENGLISH LISTENING COMPREHENSION AS PERCEIVED BY SECOND MAINSTREAM STUDENTS

The sources of students' anxiety will be presented on 4 major categories and the subcategories, in forms of 20 items in the questionnaires.

CAUSES OF LISTENING COMPREHENSION ANXIETY RELATING TO THE SPEAKERS

Speaker-related issues are categorized into speakers' speed, intonations, pronunciation and connected speech.

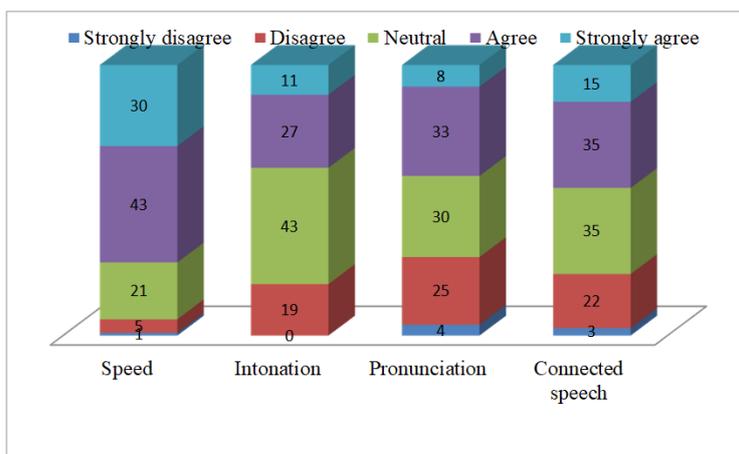


Figure 1: Causes of anxiety in English LC relating to the speakers

As can be seen from the Figure 1, 73% of the participants agree and strongly agree that they get worried when they cannot keep up with the speed of the speaker, while only 6% of them think they have no problems with the speaker's speed and the rest have neutral ideas. Therefore, it can be said that the speaker's speed has become the top problem when they listen to English.

Meanwhile, we also can see that 41 students support the idea the speaker's pronunciation is different from theirs. However, 29 students have no difficulties with speaker's pronunciation while the other 30 students do not support any side. Students' insufficient pronunciation may lead to the fact that they cannot recognize words in spoken form.

Connected speech is also a nerve that students may face when listening. It means that when the speakers use the linking words, 40% of the participants find it hard to recognize the words, which in turn

make them feel worried. At the same time, 35% of them are not sure whether this is one of the causes or not while 25% think they do not feel anxious with this factor.

As regards the ability to understand the meaning of intonation, 38 students agree with this cause of anxiety, whereas 19 others disagree with. A large number of students, particularly 43, have neutral ideas. The various intonation patterns can make a big difference to the utterance and if students do not recognize these patterns, they will not be able to understand the author's intention and get a full understanding of the spoken discourse.

CAUSES OF LISTENING COMPREHENSION ANXIETY RELATING TO THE LISTENING TEXTS

The results collected from questionnaires can be clearly demonstrated by the following table:

	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)
Topic	8	14	18	54	6
Length	2	23	37	28	10
Organization	2	16	38	32	12
Vocabulary	5	19	15	50	11

Figure 2: Causes of anxiety in English LC relating to the listening texts

The two most important factors causing anxiety among students is the unfamiliarity of the topic and the use of vocabulary in English listening texts, which is normally harder than Social English. According to the results, 60 students agree that they feel anxious when they are not familiar with the topic and vocabulary, whereas nearly 20 ones are not sure whether this is one of the causes and the other 20 response that they have no problems. Resulting from that, topic and vocabulary of the listening texts are considered as the most severe problems.

Another factor related to the listening text is the organization or in other way, the structure. As evaluated by the participants, 44% of them support the idea that they feel anxious to recognize the structure of listening text. There is a majority of students who have difficulties with listening for main points and details. Meanwhile, 38% of them remain neutral and only 18% do not share this idea.

The last factor that should be mentioned is the length of the listening texts which cause anxiety for 38% of the participants, while the number of neutral supporters is nearly the same and 25% of them disagree with this idea.

CAUSES OF LISTENING COMPREHENSION ANXIETY RELATING TO THE ENVIRONMENT

The results collected from questionnaires can be clearly demonstrated by the following table:

	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)
The poor quality of tapes/CDs	2	24	25	25	25
The surrounding noise	4	3	20	35	38
Uncomfortable listening position	3	17	44	30	4

Figure 3: Causes of anxiety in English LC associated with environment

Figure 3 shows that other three environmental elements, such as poor-quality tapes/CDs, background noise, and an uncomfortable listening position, all create anxiety among students when performing listening comprehension tasks. The data shows that half of the participants agree that the quality of tapes or CDs when listening is sometimes poor, making students uncomfortable, especially when the lecture is only read once. Due of the poor quality of recordings or CDs, it may be difficult for students to distinguish between the speaker's pronunciation and connected speech. At the same time, another 25% of students are undecided about this issue, while more than 20% believe the tapes/CDs are adequate for listening.

Another element to consider is noise, which can occur from inside or outside the classroom. The great majority of the participants (73 percent) agree that they become irritated when their surroundings are noisy. It is well established that noise is distracting, particularly when listening pupils require a high level of concentration. Only 7 pupils reject this, while 20% of them are unsure whether they are nervous as a result of this cause.

Last but not least, when listening in class and in testing rooms, students' listening position is a component that causes anxiety. As a result, 34% of participants agree that they feel tense when they are seated in a posture that is not their preference, especially too far or too near to the tape recorder or the speaker. A larger number of them (44%) remain neutral for this cause while 20% disagree with this idea.

CAUSES OF LISTENING COMPREHENSION ANXIETY RELATING TO THE LISTENERS

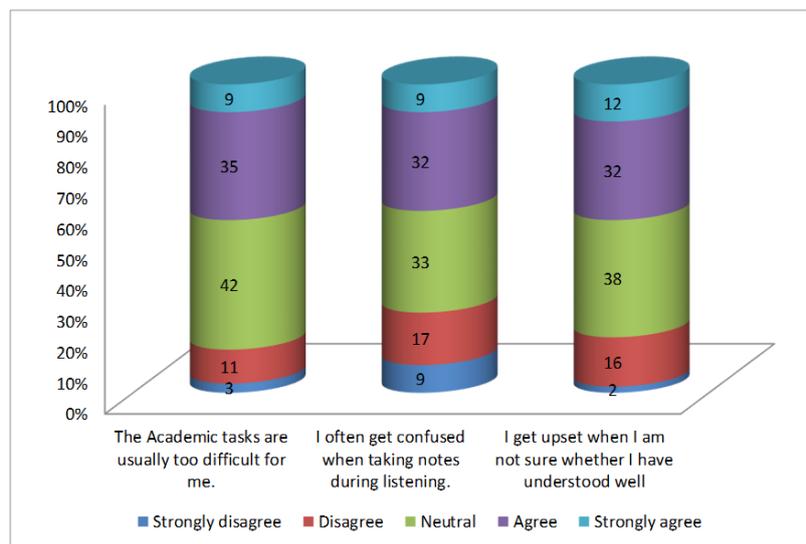


Figure 4: Causes of anxiety in English LC relating to the study skills of listeners during lessons

The data in figure 4 shows that opponents to sources of anxiety in English LC during courses make up a modest percentage of the population, around 20% in general. The level of complexity of tasks, as rated by 35 students, is the most nerve-wracking issue, while 42 students are undecided about whether this makes them feel scared or not, and the remainder have the opposite opinion. Because of the course's aims, it's natural that the tasks' difficulty levels must be higher. At the same time, 32% of participants agree that taking notes makes them feel tense, while 30% are undecided. It could be due to a lack of note-taking skills or poor time management on the part of the pupils. Another source of worry for students when listening to texts is the inability to comprehend the text, including the implication, the speaker's mood, or even the text's overall idea. That could explain why 44 percent of those polled support the notion, while 38

percent are unsure whether they are anxious when listening for understanding and only 18 percent are opposed.

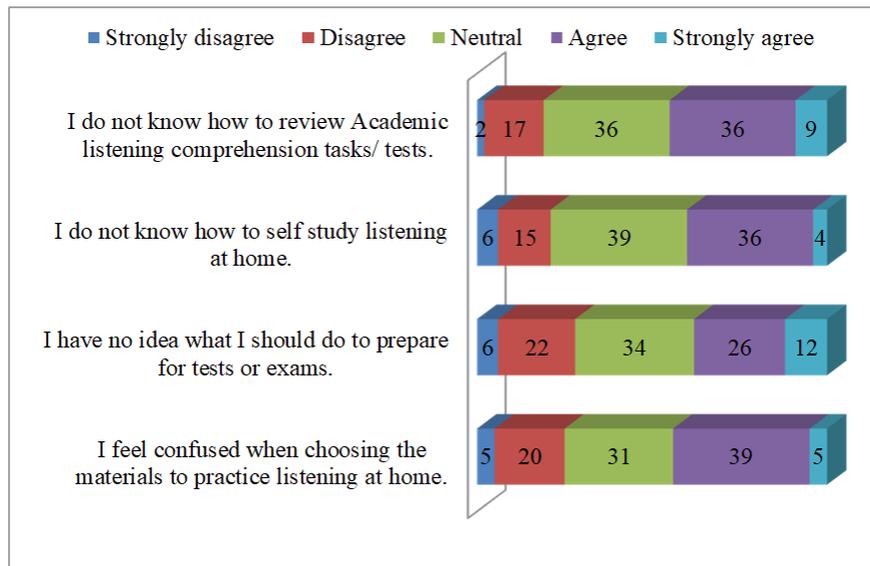


Figure 5: Causes of anxiety in English LC relating to the study skills of listeners outside listening lessons

It can be clearly seen from the figure 5 that mostly around 30% of them agree that they experience anxiety in other factors including materials choice, self-study strategies, preparation for test and tasks/test review. Meanwhile, one-third of participants have difficulties in choosing materials to practice listening at home. This is understandable because students feel confused when they do not know which source among a wide range of websites and books is reliable or suitable for them. There are the same numbers of students (36%) who feel confused when they do not know how to self-study listening at home and also feel worried when they do not know how to review listening comprehension tasks/tests. Students may get more nervous after failing in doing tasks or tests.

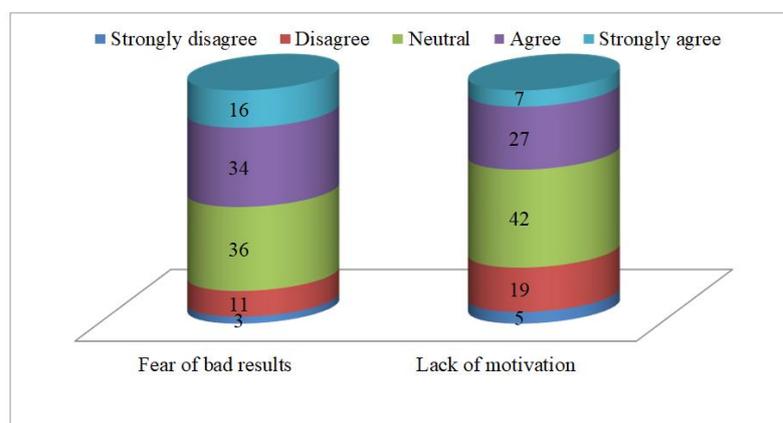


Figure 6: Causes of anxiety in English LC associated with the attitude of listeners.

As figure 6 shows, it can be easily seen that half of the participants (50%) agree that they fear of bad results in listening tests, which lead to their anxiety when listening. 36% of them cannot make sure whether they have this fear or not with this idea while only a small number of student (14%) think they have no fear of failure in tests.

Meanwhile, the number of students feel worried due to their lack of motivation when doing the listening tasks is 34%, which is less than the neutral supporters (42%), whereas 24% of them are the opponents of this idea.

THE STUDENTS' EVALUATION ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS BY THE RESEARCHER TO OVERCOME THEIR ANXIETY IN ENGLISH LISTENING COMPREHENSION

To help students overcome their anxiety when they do the English listening comprehension, the researcher has provided them with some solutions suggested by other researchers so that students may consider using them to reduce anxiety and improve their listening. The following chart presents students' evaluation on the effectiveness of those solutions:

Being put at the first place as a useful solution is “learn more vocabulary and practice more on pronunciation” and “talk to native speakers”. This is the evidence that learners have realized that speaker's pronunciation is one of the main causes for their anxiety and that pronunciation is not only important for better speaking, but also for better listening. Students' responses to question 2 show that vocabulary is a big problem for them and a majority of them agree that enhancing vocabulary is a good way to overcome anxiety. Communicating with native speakers takes up about 90 percent, which means that students are aware of the effectiveness of communication in helping them get used to speakers' speed, intonation, connected speech, etc. It is clearly a good way to make them more confident when listening.

Of the study population, 80% surveyed indicate that doing all the listening assignments and learning from the tape by playing the tapes again are effective ways. Only a minority of the participants think that those solutions are little effective. To be more specific, completing all the listening assignments means students should fulfill all the tasks assigned by teachers and in the course guidelines to achieve the aims of the current course. Moreover, learning from the listening is also an effective way to master their listening skill. By listening to the tapes again and again, students can learn not only the vocabulary but also grammar and structures, etc. The most important thing is that they can get more familiar with the speaker's pronunciation, intonation and also connected speech. It will serve as a very useful tool to make them feel more confident to do other listening tasks.

The next two useful solutions as rated by students are “learn more about the topic at home” and “practice doing tests under time pressure”. It is undeniable that good preparation at home is a useful way to help them brainstorm general ideas about the listening topic. Good preparation also enhances vocabulary related to the topics. Trying to do tests under time pressure will help students get familiar with time management when doing tests as well as realize what they should improve after checking answers and listening again.

Using Internet resources to practice listening skills is voted to an effective method to overcome students' anxiety by nearly 80 students. Technology keeps improving every day, so it serves as a good support for English learners. The appearance of various websites as well as software on the Internet creates more chance for students to master their listening skills. Students can easily find an online lecture to practice listening at home.

Other effective solutions evaluated by around 70 students are “ask the teachers to provide background knowledge and important vocabulary before listening” and “focus more on listening strategies and skills”. It is mentioned above that general knowledge and vocabulary play an important role in listening comprehension; therefore, asking for help from peers and teachers is obviously a good way to help students build up their knowledge base and confidence. One more method that is supported by nearly 60 students is doing the listening tasks in groups or pairs.

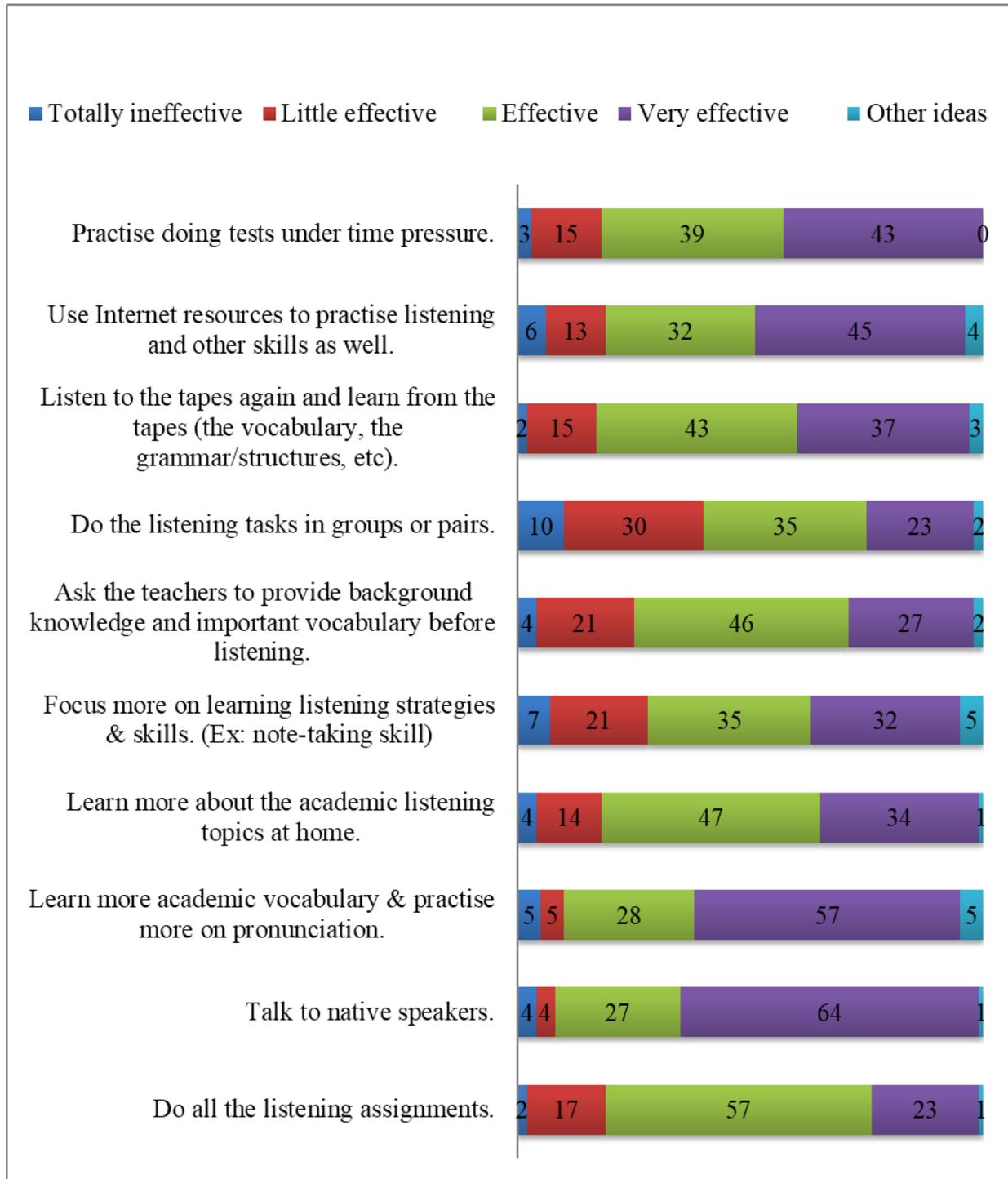


Figure 7: The students' evaluation on the effectiveness of the suggested solutions by the researcher to overcome their anxiety in English listening comprehension.

TEACHERS' SUGGESTIONS TO HELP STUDENTS OVERCOME THEIR ANXIETY IN ENGLISH LISTENING COMPREHENSION

In response to the interviewing questions, all the three teachers agreed that the biggest cause that makes students feel anxious in English listening comprehension is due to their lack of confidence leading to the fact that they do not believe in what they can hear. Because of that passiveness in listening, students may have inability to connect pieces of information and make sense of information they are listening. Therefore, the teachers interviewed suggested that students should practice listening to English more in

order to gain more confidence. Especially, students should learn to believe in what they hear. This is the most important aspect and also the hardest one that needs plenty of students' efforts.

The second biggest nerve that students may face as perceived by teachers is the vocabulary, which is considered to be more different in English listening comprehension. Resulting from the fact that students have to access to a variety of lectures in this subject so it is obviously that the vocabulary is more academic and complicated. Teacher 1, in the topic "education", some common words like schools, comments, and mark will be replaced by colleges, feedback, evaluation, marking schemes, etc. When students get stuck in one word that they have no idea what it means, they will easily get worried and stressed, which causes missing information. This will definitely prevent students from listening to specific information. Hence, the solutions suggested by the teachers include learning as many new words as possible by completing all pre-listening exercises before class or in other materials, then check pronunciation and learn to pronounce those new words correctly. When students get more familiar with the words related to the topic, they will not only gain more confidence but also have more chances to fulfill the tasks better.

Moreover, other aspects related to speakers' pronunciation, which contain intonation, fast-low speech and connected speech are regarded as a big problem to students as evaluated by the teachers. Teacher 3 mentions that many students feel surprised when checking the answers and tape script because there are many familiar words which students have been unable to recognize in utterance. That is the reason why these teachers advise students to focus more on pronunciation and practice more regularly to achieve the most effective results.

Last but not least, putting more emphasis on listening strategies and skills is also mentioned by the three teachers in the interviews. As teacher 2 said: "To overcome the anxiety when listening, students should learn effective time management strategies, better note-taking strategies, how cognition works to maximize the efficiency of studying time, take on a manageable workload, while still also employ time to make sure the mind is not burning out and take the mental pressure, which comes both internally and externally, of themselves!". That is one of the reasons that in the course book, note-taking skill is clearly guided to assist students in listening comprehension.

Overall, the main solutions suggested by the interviewees are listening to more lectures such as in IELTS, TOEFL mock tests or using some useful websites like TED.com to get more accustomed to lectures, learning more vocabulary and pronunciation as well as practice strategies and skills regularly.

DISCUSSION

This study produced the results which corroborate the findings of a great deal of the previous work in this field as mentioned in Literature review. The findings are consistent with those of Dao Thi Lan Trang (2010) and Fang Xu (2011).

First and foremost, in terms of possible causes of students' anxiety in English listening comprehension, there are similarities between the results in this research. In particular, the speed of speech delivery is considered the biggest nerve by a majority of participants in three studies (73%, 81% and 48% respectively). It is unavoidable for students to listen to a lecture from a native speaker; hence, they may fear of not being able to control the flow of the speech. According to teachers' perception through interviews, perhaps the speech was not too fast for them but the lack of confidence hindered them from keeping up with what was being said. This may lead them to miss the information in the speech. These results provide further implications for students to form a habit of listening to reduce their feeling of anxiety.

Moreover, vocabulary is also considered as a big anxiety that students face when doing listening task as supported by 61% in this study and 65% in Dao Thi Lan Trang (2010). The lack of academic vocabulary will lead to students into the situation that they cannot recognize the words when listening. Their vocabulary is not enriched enough to get the full information from the listening texts. Students may

miss the key words and have difficulties in completing the tasks. These findings suggest that students need to enhance their vocabulary to become more confident when listening

In terms of some factors related to the classroom, it was found in the study of Fang Xu that only 2% of the participants reported that uncomfortable environment (the weather and the noise) also causes their anxiety. In contrast, 40% of the participants in this study support that noise, quality of facility and listening position affect their listening comprehension. It can be easily seen that this is also a big nerve with students that was not mentioned in previous research in IS. This finding provides important implications for developing the facility of classroom to create the best environment for students.

About causes related to the listener, this study comes up with some findings that are in agreement with the study of Fang Xu and other research that was mentioned above. First of all, dealing with more difficult tasks is one of the factors causing students' anxious feeling, which is supported by 40% of the participant in this study and is also mentioned by Scarcella and Oxford (1992). Note-taking strategies and the ability to understanding or recognizing implications are important skills that every student need in LC which has 40% supporters in this study and has been discussed by many other research. Therefore, due to the lack of these skills or inappropriate strategies, students may experience the anxiety when listening. Secondly, this study has been able to demonstrate some factors related to students' study outside the class, which has not previously described. Other study skills are how to choose material to practice, how to review lessons, how to prepare for test and how to self-study. Finally, this study confirms that fear of failure and the lack of motivation are two more causes of students' anxiety when listening. This combination of findings may help students to understand their weaknesses, resulting from that, they can come up with better strategies to overcome their anxiety.

In the second place, this study is in agreement with Dao Thi Lan Trang (2010)'s findings which showed the students' evaluation of some methods' effectiveness suggested by other research focus mainly on enhance vocabulary (85%, 90% respectively), self-study at home with Internet resources (85%, 91%) and do all the assignments regularly (90% and 81%). Communicating with native speakers is also evaluated by 90 students as an effective way to overcome their anxiety in listening while 78 students are the supporters of this idea in the study by Fang Xu (2010). However, another interesting finding from this study is that a large number of students (about 80%) response that preparation at home about listening topics and review of vocabulary, grammar or structures from the tapes again are also two effective ways to help them reduce anxiety and get better listening. While 61% of the participants in the study Fang Xu (2011) offered the suggestions focusing on increasing class time for LC and combining LC with other skills, 67% in this study are also aware of the importance of learning listening strategies and skills, especially note-taking skill which is emphasized in the interviews with teachers. Therefore, this suggested solution should also be taken into consideration. All of these findings with the support from the interview with the teachers are important implications which will be revealed in the next chapter.

CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, the study could be extremely beneficial to students, teachers, and researchers working on related issues:

As for students, this study offers them a chance to be aware of the causes of their listening anxiety. The study also provides them with some effective solutions they can employ to reduce their anxiety and get more confidence in doing listening tasks.

Regarding teachers, the study enables them to have an overview of their students' anxiety in English listening comprehension. Through this, the teachers can understand the main causes making students feel worried when listening to lectures; therefore, they can adapt their teaching methods in class to help their students. Besides, the research also reveals certain suggestions and recommendations for teachers to improve their students' listening skill.

Finally, for researchers who develop an interest in the same or related matter, this study could be the useful information source for their studies in the future.

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APPENDICE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

Dear students,

My name is Lai Thanh Van from Department of Academics Foundation. I am doing a study on the anxiety in Academic English listening comprehension experienced by 1st year students at IS, VNU. I would like to hear from you what causes this anxiety and how you can possibly solve it. Therefore, please give your answers truthfully for a guaranteed success of this investigation. *Thank you very much for your cooperation.*

QUESTIONS FOR SURVEY

Do you think that you are suffering from listening anxiety in Academic English?

A. Yes

B. No

(If your answer is **Yes**, please answer questions 1-30

If your answer is **No**, please go to page 3 and answer questions 31 & 32)

Read the following statements 1-20 which anticipate the causes of your anxiety in Academic English listening comprehension. Please specify your degree of agreement/disagreement by ticking (v) the appropriate columns.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
1	I get worried when I cannot keep up with the speed of the speaker.					
2	I am worried I might not understand the speaker anymore when he/she changes intonations.					
3	It is difficult to listen because speaker's pronunciation is different from mine.					
4	I get upset when I cannot recognize the words through speakers' connected speech.					
5	I am anxious that I am not familiar with the topic of the listening lectures.					
6	I am nervous when listening to a long text.					
7	I feel worried to understand the structure of the listening					

	text					
8	I get stuck when I come across new words.					
9	The quality of tapes/CDs in class/test room is often not good.					
10	I get annoyed when the environment around me is noisy.					
11	The Academic tasks are usually too difficult for me.					
12	I often get confused when taking notes during listening.					
13	I feel nervous when I have to understand the text well. (Implications, attitudes of speakers...)					
14	I feel confused when choosing the materials to practice listening at home.					
15	I have no idea what I should do to prepare for tests or exams.					
16	I do not know how to self study listening at home.					
17	I do not know how to review Academic listening comprehension tasks/ tests.					
18	I get worried when sitting far away from the tape recorder or the speaker.					
19	I fear I will have bad result in listening test.					
20	I do not feel motivated when doing listening tasks.					

These following statements 21-30 present the suggested solutions by other research to help students overcome their anxiety. Please evaluate the effectiveness of these solutions by ticking (v) the appropriate column.

1. Totally ineffective 2. Little effective 3. Effective
4. Very effective 5. Other ideas

	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
21	Do all the listening assignments.					
22	Talk to native speakers.					
23	Learn more academic vocabulary & practice more on pronunciation.					
24	Learn more about the academic listening topics at home.					
25	Focus more on learning listening strategies & skills.					

	(Ex: note-taking skill)					
26	Ask the teachers to provide background knowledge and important vocabulary before listening.					
27	Do the listening tasks in groups or pairs.					
28	Listen to the tapes again and learn from the tapes (the vocabulary, the grammar/structures, etc).					
29	Use Internet resources to practice listening and other skills as well.					
30	Practice doing tests under time pressure.					
	Others (please specify):					

If you are NOT suffering from listening anxiety in Academic English, please answer these following questions:

31. What factors make you confident in Academic English listening? (Can you give some examples?)

.....

32. Can you give your friends some advice to help them overcome their anxiety in Academic English listening comprehension?

.....

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

1. From your perspective, what are the possible causes for the students' anxiety in Academic listening comprehension?
2. From your perspective, what should the students do to overcome their anxiety in Academic listening comprehension?