



Listening Comprehension in English Language Learning: Challenges, Strategies, and Students' Attitudes at a Private University

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ABSTRACT

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This study examined the challenges that English majors faced when attempting to enhance their listening comprehension, a crucial aspect of learning a foreign language. It also examined the strategies they used to solve these problems and their attitude toward learning to listen. The researchers employed both a questionnaire administered to 110 students and semi-structured interviews conducted with six students and six lecturers at a private university in Vietnam. This mixed-method approach was useful for gathering both general trends and detailed insights. The findings revealed common difficulties, including rapid speech, limited vocabulary, challenging accents, and difficulty understanding spoken language. Students employed various strategies to address these problems, including cognitive strategies (identifying keywords and inferring meaning), metacognitive strategies (planning and verifying understanding), and affective strategies (maintaining motivation), which aided them during their listening practice. The study also explored students' attitudes, which are both positive and negative toward listening comprehension. In addition, lecturers' perceptions of how students performed were also examined. Overall, the study aims to help lecturers and universities design more effective listening activities so that students can build confidence and succeed in learning English.

Introduction

In today's globalized world, English is a vital language for personal and professional growth (Nishanthi, 2018), and listening is frequently considered one of the most crucial of the four language skills (speaking, reading, writing, and listening) to facilitate effective communication. As Purba (2020) argues, acquiring the skill of listening can pave the way for learning other language skills because listening is not just the hearing of sounds; rather, it is the close attention to interpret and understand spoken expressions (Diora & Rosa, 2020). When listening, we attempt to understand the speaker's words and meaning by applying our knowledge and experience; therefore, Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) emphasize the crucial role of comprehension, i.e., without understanding, learning cannot occur. However, listening comprehension can be challenging, depending on factors such as the speaker's speed, accent,

topic, and attentional failure (Goh, 2000; Field, 2009; Vandergrift, 2007). Listening also varies in complexity, shaped by sounds, past experiences, and context (Bingol, 2017; Vani & Veeranjanyulu Naik, 2023).

In Vietnam, English is taught as a foreign language, and proficiency is often required for university admission and graduation. However, the school curriculum tends to focus on grammar and reading, with little emphasis on listening or speaking (Phan & Nguyen, 2023). The education system's exam-oriented approach creates this imbalance because it focuses on written assessments through multiple-choice grammar questions and reading comprehension tasks. The education system's emphasis on direct testing leads teachers and students to focus most of their time on tested areas, while communicative skills like listening and speaking remain underdeveloped in classroom practice. This results in students arriving at university with poor listening skills and facing significant challenges in comprehension (Mirza et al., 2021).

Despite growing interest in listening strategies, many studies examine challenges and solutions separately, so there is a lack of integrated research that connects listening difficulties, the strategies learners use, and their attitudes toward listening comprehension. Few studies have explored how these elements interact with each other or considered the role of external factors, such as teacher support and classroom environment. Alzamil (2021) is an example that overlooks the role of educators in shaping student motivation, particularly those who adopt a holistic perspective that supports both cognitive and emotional development. To address this gap, this study investigates the challenges, strategies, and attitudes related to listening comprehension among English majors in Vietnam. By focusing on learners' perspectives, this research aims to offer a more complete understanding of how to support listening development in EFL contexts and provide practical insights for teachers to design more effective listening instruction.

Literature Review

Why listening comprehension matters

Listening comprehension is a foundational component of second language acquisition. Far from being a passive activity, listening is a complex and active process that requires learners to decode sounds, recognize words, interpret grammatical structures, and integrate this input with prior knowledge to construct meaning (Buck, 2010; Rost, 2015). As Field (2009) explains, effective listening includes two important processes: bottom-up processing, which involves recognizing and decoding the speech signal, and top-down processing, which involves using context, background knowledge, and prediction. Vandergrift (2007) also highlights the importance of both cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Skilled listeners can process language, check their understanding, and adjust their strategies to improve comprehension. These viewpoints show that listening is a central part of communication and should be taught directly and practiced regularly to help learners build independent listening skills.

Additionally, the importance of listening comprehension is reinforced by the challenges learners face in mastering it. Namaziandost et al. (2020) emphasize that input-related issues and emotional factors, such as anxiety, significantly hinder EFL students' ability to understand spoken English. These difficulties highlight the need for targeted strategies, such as planning and monitoring, to support listening development. Similarly, Nushi and Orouji (2020) argue that successful comprehension depends on learners' ability to interpret messages using

knowledge of pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, cultural context, and speaker accents—underscoring the cognitive and linguistic complexity of effective listening.

Furthermore, Purba (2020) supports earlier research by emphasizing that listening is a receptive skill that builds the foundation for developing other language abilities. This also highlights its important role as the main source of input for developing key skills such as speaking, reading, and writing. Moreover, Ghafar et al. (2023) depict that listening requires continuous mental engagement, requiring learners to understand, remember, and connect ideas while adjusting comprehension in real time based on new input. Given its complexity and importance, listening comprehension should be prioritized in curriculum design and classroom instruction.

Challenges in Listening Comprehension

For people learning a new language, understanding a speech may be the most challenging (Saraswaty, 2018). If one misses messages, miscommunication could follow (Sharif et al., 2024). Along with differences and the complexity of talks, several elements contribute to these difficulties, including speech patterns and poor audio quality (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016; Ali, 2020). Knowing the terms does not always help learners understand when they encounter unfamiliar accents (Phan & Nguyen, 2023). Furthermore, limited vocabulary and knowledge of grammar are also significant obstacles (Hermida, 2021; Tran et al., 2021). Tran et al. (2021) found that Vietnamese English majors struggled with unfamiliar topics, especially when combined with unclear messaging, accented speech, or fast-paced dialogue. To address these challenges, learners employed strategies such as focusing on key terms and interpreting nonverbal cues, including gestures. Additionally, Bui (2024) reported that students faced difficulties when topics were uninteresting or unrelated to their personal experiences, and that poor audio quality and a lack of background knowledge (schema) further hindered comprehension.

Moreover, for students who are not familiar with reduced forms, such as “wanna” and “gonna”, as idioms and informal expressions, listening comprehension may be more difficult (Rungsinanont 2024). The comprehension of spoken information can be impeded by the lack of aids in recordings, as students often rely on written words or facial expressions during in-person interactions (Fadili et al., 2024). Finally, affective factors such as anxiety (while doing tests) also impact listening performance. Learners can find it hard to concentrate or may feel less confident if they do not understand the message right away (Li et al., 2023). Thus, improving listening comprehension requires not only language knowledge but also strategic practice and positive learner attitudes.

Strategies for Listening Comprehension

Based on Vandergrift (1999), who classifies these techniques into cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, and socio-affective strategies, researchers have emphasized the importance of listening techniques in enhancing students’ understanding ability and facilitating their grasp and recall of content. These three categories provide a useful framework for teaching and learning listening comprehension in foreign language classrooms.

Employing the active use of cognitive strategies can boost learner engagement and proficiency (Anggarista & Wahyudin, 2022). Using techniques such as note-taking and summarizing can assist students in improving their comprehension (Al Ghazo, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2024). Cognitive strategies focus on helping learners process the information they hear, make connections with what they already know, and remember key points. The studies have consistently highlighted how these strategies can impact student involvement and competency.

Good listeners, according to the term ‘metacognitive strategies’ discussed by Jyoti (2020), are students who can plan, monitor, and reflect on their listening process. Goh & Vandergrift (2021) emphasized their role in promoting learner autonomy and improving self-regulation. These strategies encourage students to take control of their learning by being aware of how they listen and by adjusting their approach when needed. These strategies are employed to manage, evaluate, and change learning styles to regulate or control them. Although the impact on metacognitive awareness was less clear (Pei et al., 2023), recent studies suggest that self-directed online listening can be supported by metacognitive cycles to improve listening comprehension. For example, learners may first set goals for a listening task, check their understanding during the activity, and then reflect afterward to improve next time.

Socio-affective tactics refer to the interactions students have with others to either manage their emotions or facilitate their learning. These include group projects, clarifying questions, and maintaining composure while listening. These strategies are especially useful for lowering anxiety and increasing confidence, which are common challenges in listening activities. For instance, Fathi et al. (2020) and Chriswiyati (2022) found that learners using socio-affective strategies could reduce listening anxiety and improve comprehension. Meanwhile, Prayogi et al. (2019) observed that students had better performance in listening when they used emotional regulation and worked together with classmates. Additionally, as Namaziandost et al. (2019) suggest, to overcome these sources of challenges, foreign language learners are required to be strategic listeners. This means knowing when and how to apply different strategies in various situations. As a result, learners who are familiar with several approaches and know how to apply them can select the most appropriate ones for each listening task. Teachers can help by guiding learners in identifying which strategies work best for different types of listening exercises.

Students’ Attitudes towards Listening Comprehension

Students’ attitudes play a crucial role in the development of listening comprehension skills. Attitudes refer to learners’ feelings, beliefs, and opinions about language learning, and they can significantly influence motivation, effort, and overall performance. In particular, attitudes toward listening in English, such as whether learners view it as useful, achievable, or enjoyable, can strongly influence their willingness to engage in listening tasks, the effort they invest in improving their skills, and the degree of satisfaction they experience during the activity (Goh, 2000). While positive attitudes often lead to better learning outcomes, negative attitudes may hinder effective listening. Therefore, attitude is a key factor influencing learners’ intentions and behaviors in language learning (Getie, 2020). As Saraswaty (2018) observes, students who perceive listening as frustrating, overly difficult, or irrelevant are more likely to disengage from the learning process or perform poorly in listening tasks. In contrast, those with positive attitudes tend to approach listening with greater motivation, openness, and strategic awareness, making them more likely to benefit from instructional activities and develop stronger listening comprehension over time.

When students consider listening as important and beneficial, they tend to invest time and effort in improving their skills. According to Vandergrift (2005), learners who perceive listening as a valuable skill are more likely to use strategies and remain motivated. In contrast, if they view listening as overly difficult or unengaging, they may become disinterested and avoid listening tasks, particularly when coping with the speed of text delivery (Graham, 2006).

It is essential to acknowledge the interplay between emotional, cognitive, and instructional factors in EFL contexts. For instance, Fathi et al. (2020) found that English majors who reduced listening anxiety and increased self-efficacy after metacognitive strategy instruction expressed more positive attitudes toward English listening tasks. Teachers also play a vital role in shaping

students' attitudes by fostering a supportive learning environment. As noted by Paramole et al. (2024), teachers can improve students' learning by giving helpful feedback, using interesting materials, and making the classroom atmosphere more encouraging. In addition, teachers' attitudes, teaching methods, and the use of different listening materials can increase students' motivation and involvement in learning (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016).

Research Questions

This study aims to explore the difficulties encountered by English majors at a private university in Vietnam in understanding spoken English, examine the techniques they employ to address these issues, investigate lecturers' views on effective methods for improving listening ability, and assess students' perspectives on their listening experiences and learning processes.

To achieve its objectives, the study aims to address the following questions.

1. What challenges do Vietnamese English majors face in listening comprehension?
2. What strategies do these students use to overcome listening comprehension challenges?
3. What strategies do lecturers perceive as effective in enhancing listening comprehension?
4. What are students' attitudes toward listening comprehension and related learning experiences?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

This study was conducted at the Faculty of Foreign Languages of a private university in Vietnam, where English is taught as a major subject. The university provides a structured English language program that includes listening courses during the first and second academic years.

The researchers employed a small group of participants due to the limited time available for the investigation, which consisted of six English lecturers and 110 English majors in their first and second years. The students were selected for the study because they are currently in the primary process of developing their English speaking and listening abilities, and the lecturers were incorporated to provide additional information from the perspective of a teacher. The researchers were able to identify valuable ideas within a brief period, despite the group being relatively small, which enabled them to complete the study on time. Among the student participants, 6 were randomly selected for semi-structured interviews to explore their attitudes and personal experiences with listening comprehension. Lecturers who have been teaching listening skills for at least three years were invited to participate in the interviews to provide insights into the challenges students face and effective strategies to enhance their listening comprehension.

All participants were selected through convenience sampling, based on their accessibility and willingness to participate. This sampling approach allowed the researcher to efficiently collect relevant data, although it may limit the generalizability of the findings.

Design of the Study

This study employed a mixed-method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges, strategies, and attitudes in listening comprehension.

Quantitative data were collected through a closed-ended questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale, which was distributed online via Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of 31 content questions, divided into seven parts, and employed a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The questionnaire had two main sections: demographic information and content questions.

The demographic section asked about students' gender, year of study, English listening experience, and their feelings about their listening level, and the content section focused on two topics:

- (1) Problems that students face when listening to English, namely vocabulary, fast speech, unclear pronunciation, and lack of topic knowledge. These problems were grouped into four areas: the dialogue content, language difficulties, the listener, and the speaker.
- (2) Strategies students use to improve listening, including metacognitive (planning and checking), cognitive (repeating, guessing, using keywords), and socio-affective (asking others, managing anxiety) strategies.

This questionnaire was adapted from Huong et al. (2021) and modified slightly to align with the objectives of this study. In contrast, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted via Microsoft Teams. These interviews were conducted with selected students and lecturers to explore their attitudes, experiences, and suggestions regarding listening challenges and strategies.

In summary, this approach enabled the researchers to obtain two types of information: quantitative results revealed broad patterns, and qualitative insights provided those patterns with greater depth and meaning.

Data Collection

A Google Form with clear instructions was distributed to the students over six weeks. However, there were only 110 responses collected. The questionnaire, consisting of 31 Likert-scale items across seven sections Vietnamese language for better understanding. Its content regarding listening challenges and strategies was adapted from Huong et al. (2021) to suit this study's objectives. After that, the responses were analyzed using SPSS, version 22.0. Before the questionnaire was officially distributed, a pilot study was conducted to test its reliability. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated at 0,943, indicating a high level of consistency across each part and ensuring the items accurately measure the research concepts.

Regarding the qualitative data, six English-major students and six lecturers participated in 25-minute semi-structured interviews conducted via MS Teams. The interviews were conducted and recorded in Vietnamese with participants' consent, and then they were transcribed and translated into English. A faculty expert revised the interview questions, and researchers cross-checked the translations for accuracy. To make the analysis more reliable, the researchers coded some of the interview transcripts separately. Then, they compared their results to see if they understood the answers in the same way. If there were any differences, they discussed and resolved them together to ensure the data was more accurate and trustworthy. The transcriptions were sent back to the interviewees for approval of their accurate ideas.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS version 22.0. Descriptive statistics were used to identify common listening challenges and examine students' attitudes toward listening comprehension. The responses were organized by variable and presented descriptively.

For the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews with students and lecturers were analyzed using content analysis to explore participants' attitudes and strategies related to listening comprehension. Content analysis was chosen because it helps identify common ideas, recurring words, and significant patterns in the interviews. It is useful for understanding people's experiences and opinions, and helps group similar answers together simply and clearly.

To ensure confidentiality, participants for interviews were coded anonymously: lecturers as L01–L06 and students as S01–S06. This coding system preserved anonymity and supported accurate referencing during analysis.

Results

Question 1: What challenges do Vietnamese English majors face in listening comprehension?

Table 1

Listening Comprehension Challenges

Items	n	Mean	SD
1. I find it challenging to understand the dialogue when there are too many new words.	110	3.62	1.00
2. I find it hard to follow dialogues that use collocation idioms.	110	3.74	1.00
3. I find it challenging to understand when the dialogue has complex grammatical structures.	110	3.57	0.95
4. A long dialogue makes me feel tired or lose concentration while listening.	110	3.76	1.00
5. I find it challenging due to a lack of background knowledge about unfamiliar topics.	110	3.68	1.00
6. I find it challenging to listen to the conversation if I am not interested in the topic.	110	3.32	1.10

Table 1 presents 6 items that illustrate the challenges in the content of the dialog, indicating that these areas are the most critical challenges to comprehension. On average, the most challenging aspect of the content that students face in listening comprehension is long dialogues, which cause them to lose concentration ($M = 3.76$; $SD = 1.00$). Next, many students posed a significant challenge in facing collocations and idiomatic expressions ($M=3.74$; $SD=1.00$). Encountering new or unfamiliar words in dialogues presents a notable challenge for students ($M = 3.62$; $SD = 1.00$), while a lack of background knowledge ranks as the third most critical difficulty ($M = 3.68$; $SD = 1.00$). Regarding complex grammatical structure, it remains a challenge for students ($M = 3.57$; $SD = 0.95$). In addition, the uninteresting topic is less challenging but still significant ($M=3.32$; $SD=1.10$).

Table 2

Challenges associated with linguistic factors

Items	n	Mean	SD
7. I have a challenge following conversations if the sentences are long and complex.	110	3.62	0.98
8. Unclear pronunciation from the speaker makes it hard for me to understand.	110	4.00	0.93
9. I struggle to notice signals that show a change in the conversation's points.	110	3.47	1.17
10. I stop listening and think about the meaning of unfamiliar words.	110	3.24	1.06

As shown in Table 2, a large number of participants reported that the challenge related to linguistic factors was unclear pronunciation ($M = 4.00$; $SD = 0.93$). This suggests that students frequently encounter difficulties in understanding speakers with unclear pronunciation. The second challenge concerns following conversations when sentences are long and complex ($M=3.62$ and $SD=0.98$). For the third challenge in this table, some students often stopped to think about unfamiliar words in a conversation. This indicates that students continue to struggle with vocabulary in listening comprehension ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 1.17$). The least challenging factor is the difficulty in noticing signals that indicate a change in the dialog, which means that participants find it hard to follow and comprehend the meaning in listening tasks ($M = 3.24$; $SD = 1.06$).

Table 3

Challenges Encountered by Students in Listening Comprehension

Items	n	Mean	SD
11. I cannot focus because I have to both find the answer and listen to the conversation.	110	3.45	1.08
12. I lose track of the conversation because I focus too much on understanding vocabulary.	110	3.33	1.07
13. I find it hard to understand the conversation due to limited vocabulary and grammar.	110	3.46	1.10
14. I am very slow at inferring the meaning of words in the conversation.	110	3.20	1.05
15. I find it hard to recognize and understand unfamiliar accents.	110	3.44	1.07

Table 3 presents the challenges faced by students in listening comprehension. Firstly, Unfamiliar vocabulary becomes a significant challenge that students encounter in listening comprehension ($M=3.46$; $SD=1.08$). However, students can infer the meaning of words in conversation, which accounted for the lowest score ($M = 3.20$; $SD = 1.05$). Additionally, finding the answers and listening to the conversation simultaneously is a third challenge for students ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 1.08$). Moreover, unfamiliar accents from the speaker are one of the significant challenges ($M=3.44$; $SD=1.07$). Students tend to lose track of the conversation because they focus too much on understanding vocabulary ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.07$).

Table 4

Listening Comprehension Issues Due to Fast and Unclear Speech

Items	n	Mean	SD
16. I struggle to understand words in complex phrases when the speech is fast.	110	3.74	1.01
17. I can not summarize the information from the conversation due to the fast pace.	110	3.46	1.08
18. I have difficulty when the speaker does not pause between sentences.	110	3.68	1.02

As shown in Table 4, students encountered difficulties in understanding a dialogue where the speech was fast and unclear. That means the speaker is the variable that causes difficulties in students' listening comprehension. Three difficulty items can be highlighted as the most common, such as understanding words in complex phrases when the speech is fast ($M= 3.74$ and $SD= 1.10$), when the speaker does not pause between sentences ($M= 3.68$ and $SD=1.02$), and summarizing the information of the dialogue due to fast-paced ($M= 3.46$ and $SD=1.08$).

In short, students responded to four challenges that affect their listening comprehension, including linguistic factors, speech delivery, and the interaction between the listener and the

speaker. Specifically, the majority of students claimed that unclear pronunciation by the speaker makes it hard for students to understand. Additionally, most students feel tired or lose concentration while listening to a long conversation. Furthermore, many students struggle with complex phrases and grammar structure in fast speech. Finally, students have to deal with unfamiliar words and grammar in the conversation.

Question 2: What strategies do these students use to overcome listening comprehension challenges?

Table 5

Employing Metacognitive Strategies during Listening

Items	n	Mean	SD
19. I make sure I understand the purpose of the listening activity.	110	3.80	0.91
20. I have a clear plan in mind about how to listen.	110	3.59	0.87
21. I identify errors after completing a listening passage	110	3.61	0.94
22. After finding the mistakes, I replay the conversation to correct and improve them.	110	3.80	0.89
23. I identify my mistakes I often make and learn from them for future listening.	110	4.00	0.85

The findings for the five questions concerning metacognitive strategies to overcome challenges faced by English major students are presented in Table 5. The most commonly applied strategy was to identify mistakes to learn from for the future listening task ($M = 4.00$; $SD = 0.85$). Specifically, replaying the conversation to listen again and understanding the purpose of listening were the same, as evidenced by a Mean of 3.80, with standard deviations of 0.89 and 0.91, respectively. Next, identifying errors after completing a listening passage is also a strategy that can help students develop listening comprehension ($M = 3.61$; $SD = 0.94$). The least applied strategy was having a clear plan for how to listen.

Table 6

Employing Cognitive Strategies during Listening

Items	n	Mean	SD
24. I pay attention to stressed words in the conversation.	110	3.85	0.92
25. I use note-taking strategies to highlight and note important information.	110	3.68	0.97
26. I use available information to analyze answers and predict outcomes	110	3.94	0.86

In terms of applying cognitive listening strategies, the most commonly employed strategies are focusing on the main ideas, followed by the detailed ideas ($M = 3.95$; $SD = 0.90$). Moreover, using available information to analyze and predict outcomes is an effective strategy that students employ more frequently ($M = 3.94$; $SD = 0.86$). Additionally, noticing the stress in the conversation is ranked 3rd ($M=3.85$; $SD=0.92$) and using note-taking ($M=3.68$; $SD=0.97$), which suggests that many participants recognize its inefficiency. Overall, the data indicate strong engagement with cognitive strategies, particularly those involving highlighting main ideas and predicting the context of the conversation through their background knowledge.

Table 7

Employing Social-Affective Strategies to Enhance Listening

Items	n	Mean	SD
27. I ask my lecturers to explain the unfamiliar words or phrases of the dialogue.	110	3.48	1.02
28. The teacher and I preview the listening questions before starting the dialogue.	110	3.78	1.00
29. I assess my understanding by confirming the content with classmates.	110	3.66	0.89
30. I collaborate with my friends to reduce stress during listening practice.	110	3.82	1.00
31. I ask my classmates when I do not understand the content of the dialogue.	110	3.78	0.98

Meanwhile, participants use social-affective strategies and agree that it is one of the ways to help them be positive in the listening class. The preference in this strategy is collaboration with friends ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.00$). Next, the lecturers help students to review the question and ask classmates when they do not understand the content of the dialog is one of the ways to help students in developing their listening comprehension with $M=3.78$ and $SD=1.00$ and 0.98 , respectively). In addition, assessing understanding by confirming content with classmates is assessed effectively ($M = 3.66$; $SD = 0.89$). When encountering vocabulary difficulties, students ask their lecturers for clarification of unfamiliar words or phrases in the dialogue ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 1.02$). According to the given result, students also require social-affective strategies to enhance their listening comprehension. The support from friends and lecturers helps students ensure their understanding and reduce stress during listening classes.

In summary, metacognitive, cognitive, and social strategies are surveyed to explore how students' listening comprehension is affected. Regarding the means of listening comprehension strategies, the cognitive strategies ranged from 3.68 to 3.94, indicating a relatively high level of usage among participants, and most students use them to help enhance their listening comprehension. The metacognitive strategies ranged from 3.59 to 4.0, indicating that students frequently employed these strategies to overcome challenges in listening comprehension. Meanwhile, the social-affective listening strategies had mean scores ranging from 3.48 to 3.74, reflecting a slightly lower but still moderate level of use.

Question 3: What strategies do lecturers perceive as effective in enhancing listening comprehension?

All six lecturers emphasized the critical role of listening strategies in language learning. They believe that students need effective approaches to overcome listening difficulties and that integrating strategy training into instruction helps improve listening comprehension. In particular, cognitive strategies, especially note-taking, were consistently highlighted as essential. They viewed note-taking as a practical tool for organizing and retaining information, understanding main ideas, and enhancing overall comprehension.

Several lecturers pointed out the benefits of note-taking:

“Note-taking in cognitive strategy is useful when listening multiple times, as it helps remember key information for answering questions. It helps students focus on other aspects of the text, such as keywords.” [L01]

“The most effective one is note-taking. Students should know how to take notes of the main ideas and how to spot the details that are important to the content of the topic.” [L02]

“Note-taking is probably the most used strategy that I encourage students to use.” [L03]

Others emphasized its role in comprehension and learning transfer:

"I used note-taking to ensure students not only grasped the content in English but also understood it well enough to validate their comprehension across languages." [L04]

"Note-taking helps students recall and organize what they have heard. Understanding the structure and flow of the listening text is also crucial for comprehension." [L05]

"The ability to take notes when listening is very important. They need to recall what they have listened to and understand the organization, the structure of the audio." [L06]

Overall, they consistently promoted cognitive strategies, particularly note-taking, as fundamental tools for enhancing students' listening skills and comprehension performance.

All lecturers acknowledged the significance of metacognitive strategies—planning, monitoring, and evaluating—as essential tools for enhancing students' listening comprehension. These strategies were seen as integral to both classroom instruction and students' independent learning processes.

Half of the lecturers emphasized the value of planning as a foundational step in helping learners focus on key elements of a listening task. The following opinions proved that point.

"Planning would be good because it's going to help you with what you need to look for and what you need to prepare to get ready." [L01]

"Planning is the most important step, in my opinion. Having a clear purpose helps them listen more effectively by focusing on key details rather than trying to process everything at once." [L05]

"My students need to have a plan to predict, to analyze the questions before listening... and to get some knowledge about the topic beforehand." [L06]

They also stressed the importance of combining monitoring and evaluation to improve comprehension and learning outcomes:

"Monitoring would help you to keep track of what you're doing... Evaluating is the kind of reflection when you look at yourself again and learn something new." [L01]

"I usually ask students to use monitoring most in the low-level classes when they cannot follow long audio... and use evaluating to check their understanding." [L02]

Beyond the classroom, some lecturers connected metacognitive strategies to self-directed learning, especially in preparation for listening tests or real-life communication:

"Metacognitive strategies are more about how students use them in their self-study process to improve their listening comprehension." [L03]

"Yes, of course, this is something I strongly emphasize. Each phase of planning, monitoring, and evaluating could have a responsibility in enhancing listening comprehension." [L04]

The lecturers acknowledged that social-affective strategies, such as peer collaboration, group work, and emotional support, can foster a more engaging and supportive classroom environment. These strategies were primarily viewed as useful for promoting class participation, reducing anxiety, and improving learner motivation.

However, most lecturers agreed that while these approaches create a positive atmosphere during lessons, they are not directly linked to enhancing listening comprehension, especially since

listening assessments are individual tasks. As a result, social-affective strategies were primarily recommended for in-class activities, not for test preparation or skill development.

“Socio-affective strategies improve collaboration and group work skills, but I don’t believe they improve listening skills. They just make the class less boring.” [L01]

“Collaborative technique is useful for class activities. However, since listening is tested individually, I rarely use them for skill development.” [L02]

“Group work creates a more exciting environment. Students support each other instead of facing tasks alone, which can feel too rigid for one student.” [L03]

They highlighted the distinction between classroom interaction and formal assessments:

“We do collaborative listening in class—pairs, small groups, or peer work—but during assessments, listening is individual. That’s the key distinction.” [L04]

“I use peer collaboration sometimes. It’s effective in letting students share ideas and give feedback, but not a central strategy for improving listening skills.” [L05]

“Yes, but not very often. Peer collaboration helps students learn from each other’s perspectives, but it’s not a focus on listening development.” [L06]

In conclusion, all six lecturers agreed on the importance of including listening strategies in language teaching. They especially emphasized cognitive strategies, with note-taking seen as the most helpful for improving understanding, organizing ideas, and remembering information. Metacognitive strategies, such as planning, were also considered important because they help students stay focused and take more control of their listening tasks. Although social-affective strategies were recognized for encouraging participation and emotional support in class, they were seen as less essential for improving listening skills.

Question 4: What are students’ attitudes toward listening comprehension and related learning experiences?

The interviews revealed that the students possessed various attitudes towards listening comprehension and their learning experiences. Some demonstrated responsibility, determination, and positivity, whereas others were only able to provide descriptions of negative emotions such as frustration and self-doubt. Overall, their perceptions were based on personal experience and specific learning environments.

Most students responded to listening challenges with a proactive and open attitude. They emphasized the importance of taking charge of their learning and were willing to face difficulties rather than avoid them. Common approaches included completing tasks carefully, engaging actively in class, and seeking opportunities to improve independently. Their positive outlooks were reflected in the following comments.

“I’m accepting my weakness, so I’m facing it with a positive, more positive attitude.” [S01]

“I’m still trying to improve it, and it has improved a lot, so it’s quite positive to me.” [S02]

“I am studying in a huge environment like a university, so everybody is trying their best, so I want to catch up with them, and I try my best with a positive attitude” [S03]

“... just thinks that it is a word or information, and I can have a chance to improve and understand it.” [S04]

However, two students acknowledged feeling discouraged when they struggled to understand spoken content. Their reactions reflected moments of low confidence or disappointment in their performance during the learning process.

"I react negatively because I feel disappointed in myself" [S05]

"I tend to react negatively sometimes because I feel that I do not know the answer." [S06]

Despite occasional challenges, most students viewed classroom exercises not as burdens, but as useful tools for development. They often accepted assignments willingly and recognized their value in helping to identify and address weaknesses in their listening skills.

"Yes, I accept the exercises given by my teacher because these exercises help me identify my weaknesses and allow me to work on improving them." [S01]

"I am satisfied. If it's easy, I will do it. And if it's too difficult, I'll complain to my teacher. But overall, the amount of exercise that I have right now it's just right for me." [S02]

"I am willing to do it when I receive a quiz or exercise from my teacher" [S03]

"Yes, I always do it seriously because I think it's very useful, and it's like a thing to practice more for the tests and exams" [S04]

"If the topic interests me, I get engaged. Overall, I'm willing to do the exercises. [S06]

Students also emphasized the significant influence of teachers on their attitudes toward listening comprehension. Positive reinforcement, encouragement, and supportive behavior from teachers appeared to enhance motivation and engagement. In contrast, overly strict or critical feedback could discourage students and affect their confidence.

"Teachers have a big impact. If they're supportive, students will engage more. But strictness can make us feel disconnected." [S01]

"Encouraging feedback is helpful. But when a teacher says 'you're wrong' without support, it can affect students negatively." [S02]

"At university, teachers are passionate and attentive. That influences me positively." [S03]

"Teachers are very important because teachers tell us what to do." [S04]

"I think Vietnamese teachers could influence us positively because they understand us, they know us more than English teachers." [S05]

"If teachers are positive, their students will reflect that. Listening needs support in class." [S06]

In general, English majors expressed a strong sense of responsibility and commitment to improving their listening comprehension. They demonstrated positive attitudes by actively engaging with tasks and showing resilience in the face of difficulty. While a few students reported negative feelings such as doubt or discouragement, these were less common. Most students viewed listening exercises as valuable learning tools. Moreover, the role of teachers emerged as crucial—supportive teaching practices were seen to foster positive attitudes and engagement, while critical or unsympathetic behavior could hinder motivation and confidence.

Discussion

With the survey and semi-structured interview results collected, it can be concluded that students in English language majors still face challenges in listening comprehension, and the role of effective strategies in overcoming these challenges is significant. Moreover, their attitude toward listening experiences and classes is also highlighted through their reactions and feelings. A total of 110 students majoring in English responded to the questionnaire, along with six students and six lecturers who participated in the semi-structured interviews.

Firstly, most of the students agreed that a long dialogue is a key challenge in its content. They feel tired and find it challenging to listen to and comprehend these dialogues. Hence, they face losing concentration while listening. This result supports the finding by Hermida (2021), who noted that when students encounter lengthy conversations, they easily forget what they have heard and lose concentration, which can lead to a misunderstanding of the content.

Secondly, many students identified the speaker's pronunciation as one of the most challenging aspects. They often struggle to listen and understand individual words. Unclear pronunciation challenges listening comprehension and reduces learning effectiveness. As a result, students had trouble identifying key ideas in conversations, affecting their performance in listening tasks and answering related questions. This finding aligns with a study by Namaziandost et al. (2019), who reported that incorrect pronunciation is a significant challenge in listening comprehension for learners of a foreign language.

Thirdly, the students face limited vocabulary, grammar, and unfamiliar accents, which make it difficult for them to understand conversations. This result is consistent with the study conducted by Dong (2022), where students found it challenging to understand the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary while listening. Moreover, the difficulties identified in the research included poor grammar and unfamiliar vocabulary, which prevented participants from understanding the meanings of spoken sentences (Hermida, 2021). Additionally, they cannot manage both tasks simultaneously, including finding the answer and listening to the conversation. That led to misinformation and reduced comprehension.

Lastly, struggling to understand complex phrases in fast speech is a common issue. Formal expressions and idioms became more challenging. This finding is related to the result of Saputri et al. (2025), i.e., fast speech hinders students' ability to understand what they hear, resulting in challenges in looking for the main information in the conversation. As Namaziandost et al. (2019) emphasized, to overcome such challenges, foreign language learners are required to be strategic listeners.

From the lecturers' interviews and students' questionnaire responses, the study identified three types of strategies used by students to enhance listening comprehension: cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective strategies.

In this study, the findings showed that students chose cognitive listening strategies with the highest mean score. This is because they often use the keywords in the questions, predict the answers based on their background knowledge, or pay attention to the teacher's emphasis in the conversation. This supports Vandergrift (1999), who stressed that effective listeners employ inference, key words, and activation of previous knowledge to comprehend spoken texts. Similarly, teachers also agreed that cognitive listening strategies are prioritized to help the students tackle listening comprehension problems, which is in line with Goh (2000), who pointed out that cognitive strategies are the most direct, readily available intervention that both teachers and learners immediately come to mind to improve comprehension.

Metacognitive strategies were also found to be effective. Students prefer to identify their mistakes after each listening task. This reflection helps them avoid their frequent mistakes and pay attention to them the next time. As a result, it can be considered that evaluating their performance is a good way for them to enhance their listening comprehension. These findings align with the study by Rahimi and Katal (2012), which examined the impact of metacognitive awareness on listening performance, specifically, learners' ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate their listening processes.

Students' attitudes also played an important role in the research. The study highlighted the attitudes of English major students toward their learning experience in developing listening comprehension. Both positive and negative attitudes were found during the students' learning process. One of the most important aspects of their attitude is that they accepted the challenges and then found suitable strategies to overcome them. These results are consistent with those reported in Haryanto and Adalta's research (2022); the students had positive attitudes toward listening and learning, and they perceived the importance of the listening practice to improve their skills. This validates the association between challenges, strategies, and learners' attitudes.

Moreover, teachers can also influence students' attitudes. According to the findings of Le & Le (2022), teachers have a significant impact on shaping students' attitudes to learn English, particularly in terms of teacher personality, professional knowledge, and communication. In the present study, students reported that educators who have a positive, supportive, and encouraging approach helped them be more engaged and work harder during class activities. On the other hand, a strict teacher may cause students to be irresponsible, avoiding questions or refusing assignments in class. This could affect a student's performance in listening comprehension.

Overall, the relationship between listening comprehension challenges and strategies is significantly relevant. Although students are studying English as their major, they still face difficulties with listening comprehension. The strategies that English-major students frequently use to overcome these challenges, along with their attitudes, can influence their performance during the learning process. Due to the importance of listening comprehension, students are expected to take responsibility for their learning, participate in listening activities, complete assignments, and respond positively to supportive teachers. It can be concluded that students generally show a more positive attitude in listening classes. Therefore, listening comprehension challenges, the use of strategies, and students' attitudes toward their listening experiences are essential areas to highlight and explore in the research.

Conclusion

This study revealed many difficulties that English-major students face with listening comprehension. These include long conversations, losing concentration, poor pronunciation, limited vocabulary, complex expressions, unfamiliar accents, and fast speech. To manage these problems, both students and lecturers suggested using strategies such as identifying keywords, using background knowledge, and predicting content. Reflecting after listening also allowed students to understand and fix their mistakes. Peers and teachers also assisted in motivating the students. Despite these challenges, most students were willing to improve and were prepared to take responsibility for their learning, and they also acknowledged that teachers played an important role in their growth. Providing students with more opportunities to practice listening, utilizing effective materials, and demonstrating how to apply strategies can make learning easier and more effective. Helping students focus on the main idea, reflect on what they hear,

and stay confident can build their skills over time. A positive classroom environment and teacher support can also help students stay motivated.

This study had some limitations. It was completed in a short time and with a small group of 110 students, so the results may not apply to all English-major students. The interviews with six students and six teachers provided helpful insights, but more voices are needed in future studies. Future studies should involve more students, with more time. In particular, experimental studies should be conducted using pre- and post-tests to assess progress more accurately. Furthermore, they could also be conducted to explore differences between male and female students, or to investigate students' attitudes towards other English skills besides writing, such as speaking or reading.

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