Intrinsic and Extrinsic Factors Affecting Non-English Majors' Listening Skill Acquisition at an English Centre in Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

Listening is a fundamental skill and also the most challenging one for EFL learners. This study explores intrinsic and extrinsic factors that affect English listening skill acquisition among non-English majors at an English centre in Vietnam. Employing a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design, the study conducted a five-point Likert questionnaire with 264 survey respondents, using correlational and regression analyses to examine and predict the relationships between learner-related factors and listening skill acquisition among learners. The analysis focused on seven variables, namely motivation, cognitive ability, language proficiency, learning strategies, teacher practices, classroom resources, and out-of-class exposure. The results showed that motivation, language proficiency, and out-of-class exposure were the strongest predictors of listening skill acquisition. The paper concludes with actionable suggestions for improving EFL listening instruction and learner engagement.

Keywords: listening skill acquisition, non-English majors, intrinsic factors, extrinsic factors, correlation

Introduction

In the context of rapid international integration, English has become a critical tool for accessing knowledge, conducting research, and participating in global communication (Crystal, 2003). Proficiency in English is increasingly recognised as a key determinant of academic and professional success, particularly in countries where English functions as a foreign language (EFL). Among the four core language skills - listening, speaking, reading, and writing - the first is often considered the most fundamental, as it provides the foundation for developing the other communicative competencies (Rost, 2011). Effective listening comprehension enables learners to decode spoken input, interpret meaning in real time, and engage meaningfully in oral interactions (Field, 2008).

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Despite its importance, listening is frequently reported as the most challenging skill for EFL learners to acquire (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). In EFL contexts, such as those in Vietnam, learners have limited access to authentic spoken English in their daily communication. The classroom often serves as the primary, and sometimes the only, environment for practising listening skills. Consequently, students face numerous difficulties when dealing with real-life speech (Trang, 2020). Many Vietnamese students found listening to be an important skill but a very difficult one (Ngo, 2022). Moreover, listening is typically underemphasized in instructional materials and teaching practices, which often prioritise grammar and vocabulary over communicative competence (Kweon & Spolsky, 2018).

These concerns are especially prominent at several English centres in Vietnam, including the English Centre where the research was conducted, with regard to non-English majors. i.e., undergraduate learners of English from local universities. In fact, in Vietnam, most non-English majors attend English classes provided by language centres to get English certificates, such as VSTEP (Vietnamese Standardised Test of English Proficiency), TOEIC, IELTS, or TOEFL, as required by Vietnam's Ministry of Education and Training for graduation. Listening assessments for this group of learners often lead to low confidence and very low performance relative to English proficiency benchmarks. It is also a significant concern for many teachers at the English Center under research. Research has shown that Vietnamese university students are not sufficiently prepared for their own English listening and require greater teacher guidance and autonomy (Vu & Shah, 2016). Their challenges can be mapped onto categorisation of *intrinsic factors* (e.g., lack of motivation, insufficient vocabulary, and poor learning strategies) and *extrinsic factors* (e.g., inadequate exposure to English outside the classroom, lack of authentic materials, and overly didactic teaching methods) (Tran & Duong, 2020). These factors contribute to determining Vietnamese learners' English proficiency (Nguyen et al., 2021).

Thus, it is essential to explore factors affecting EFL learners' listening learning, especially those at English centres in Vietnam. This study is conducted in such a centre, i.e. the IKUN English Centre, where hundreds of non-English majors are enrolled throughout the year. It then aims to investigate and analyse intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence the listening performance of non-English majors. The research findings are helpful for enhancing teaching methodologies and curriculum construction for the centre itself and those in similar EFL contexts.

Literature Review

Listening skill acquisition

Listening skill, *listening comprehension*, and *listening skill acquisition* are interrelated but somewhat different concepts. The term "listening skill" refers to the learner's ability to decode and understand spoken language using various sub-skills, such as identifying the main idea, recognising specific details, understanding tone and intonation, and making inferences (Rost, 2011). The term "listening comprehension" refers to the level of understanding that results when the learner effectively applies listening skills to a specific task or input (Field, 2008). Thus, it is usually task-dependent and depends on the listener's linguistic proficiency,

background knowledge, and listening-topic familiarity. However, the term "listening skill acquisition" mentions the long-term developmental process where the learner, step by step, internalises and improves listening abilities, and this process is concerned with cognitive, linguistic, and affective changes and is impacted by internal and external factors (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Thus, we can easily observe learners' listening skills through their performance on tasks, but their listening skill acquisition requires deeper reflection on processing efficiency and comprehension ability over time.

It is significant for non-English majors with limited exposure to English outside the classroom to find ways to enhance their listening skill acquisition as part of the language acquisition process. One of the commonly used theories of language acquisition is Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982). This theory affirms that we can learn a new language effectively once we are exposed to inputs beyond our current understanding levels, and we manage to comprehend them based on clues like context or prior knowledge. In this model, learners find that listening is not only a skill to practice but also an important means to acquire language. Supporting this view, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) highlights the role of interaction and guided learning. In his theory, the Zone of Proximal Development indicates that learners' progress results when they work with more experienced and supportive others. The two theories offer valuable insights for Vietnamese learners of English. That means teachers should provide learners with more practical and collaborative listening activities so that they can enhance their listening skill acquisition.

In terms of the stages of listening skill acquisition, Anderson (1983) outlines three major ones, namely *perception, parsing,* and *utilisation*. These stages refer to learners' receiving, organising, and interpreting auditory inputs. This three-stage operation also emphasises the role of mental processes, including attention control and working memory. Additionally, some constructivist theorists raise the significance of personal experience and active engagement in listening comprehension (Dewey, 1938; Piaget, 1950). Based on these foundational theories, recent studies have put great emphasis on meaningful listening content, learners' autonomy, and learners' involvement in shaping effective instruction (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019; Schunk, 2020). Obviously, all of their perspectives support recognising learners' experiences and integrating them into teaching and learning activities in listening classrooms.

In brief, Krashen (1982) and Anderson (1983) emphasise linguistic inputs and cognitive processes. Vygotsky (1978) and constructivists provide an understanding of the social dynamics and learner-centred elements of language acquisition. The combination of their views is useful and effective for exploring the impact of internal and external factors on the listening performance of non-English majors in Vietnam's EFL contexts.

Factors affecting learners' listening skill acquisition

Several studies have been conducted on listening skill acquisition, revealing that learners' listening development is affected by both internal and external factors.

Some evidence found in real-world classroom contexts indicates that internal factors have played a significant role in developing learners' listening skills. *Motivation* comes out as a key factor. Students' motivation refers to a combination of their desire to learn a language, efforts

to learn it, and positive attitudes toward it (Gardner, 1985). Learners with good motivation tend to exhibit more active participation and greater perseverance throughout the language learning process (Gardner, 1985); they are often more engaged in independent listening activities and have better improvement (Nguyen, 2023). The next key influence is *cognitive ability*. Cognitive ability involves language analytic ability and working memory in language learning (Li et al., 2019). Learners who can maintain good attention and working memory find it easier to follow and interpret spoken language (Vandergrift, 2007). The cognitive ability thus supports learners to focus on key information and grasp the main points of listening tasks. The third factor is *language proficiency*. In language learning, it refers to learners' general ability to use a language accurately and fluently across four language skills, reflecting their knowledge of language forms and their practical communicative competence (Hulstijn, 2015). With a good knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, learners can achieve better listening performance, as evidenced by the link between a learner's word knowledge and their ability to comprehend listening texts (Nation & Newton, 2009). Thus, learners often struggle with authentic listening materials if they lack sufficient vocabulary (Phuangsua & Chusanachoti, 2019). Pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar are influential factors in learners' listening comprehension (Bui, 2024). One vital factor is the use of *learning strategies*. Students' learning strategies are the thoughts and actions they use to achieve a learning goal (Chamot, 2004). For example, effective employment of predicting upcoming content, drawing inferences, and self-monitoring comprehension helps learners to process spoken language (Oxford, 1990). Learners prefer some strategies over others and face challenges in applying them flexibly (Ngo, 2015).

Some external influences also outline learners' listening performance. Above all are *teacher practices*. This factor refers to how teachers instruct students, evaluate them, design lesson plans, and implement the curriculum (Anderman & Anderman, 2020). When a teacher clearly instructs learners in metacognitive strategies, learners will effectively plan, control, and assess their listening (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Learners' listening performance improves through teachers' instruction on integrating metacognitive listening strategies (Nguyen & Dinh, 2023). Another factor is access to quality *learning materials*. It is essential for learners to develop their listening skills with authentic and diverse audio inputs (Field, 2008). At schools with inadequate facilities, such as outdated audio equipment and unstable internet lines, learners' listening practice is certainly hindered (Ngo & Ha, 2022). Developing listening skills is also greatly supported by *out-of-class exposure*, i.e. exposure to English beyond the classroom. When learners are engaged with English through movies, music, and real-life conversations, they can enhance their listening comprehension (Harmer, 2007). In comparison with those in urban areas with more English-listening exposure, learners in rural ones face limited chances to access such resources, leading to big gaps in their listening ability (Phuangsua & Chusanachoti, 2019)

In brief, learners' listening skill acquisition is impacted by various internal and external factors. The former ones refer to learners' individual elements, including motivation, cognitive ability, language proficiency, and learning strategies, and they all serve a crucial function. The latter ones, including teacher practices, classroom resources, and out-of-class exposure, also contribute significantly as a driving force. The cited studies are mainly based on empirical results or performance observations, lacking analysis of how learners self-perceive the factors that affect their listening learning. In addition, certain factors such as motivation or learning

strategies are found to influence listening outcomes; however, no research has specifically identified a quantitative correlation between each factor and listening skill acquisition. Thus, theoretical perspectives and empirical studies reviewed above support the idea that these aspects must be viewed as a whole for learners to achieve effective listening performance.

Research questions

This study aims to provide a clearer and more comprehensive understanding of how these factors affect listening skill acquisition among non-English majors at a language centre in Vietnam, i.e., the IKUN English Centre. To fulfil this aim, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How do non-English majors perceive factors affecting their English listening skill acquisition?
2. What is the correlation between these factors and non-English majors' listening skill acquisition?

Methods

Pedagogical setting and participants

This research was conducted at a private English Centre in Vietnam. It serves learners from various universities with various academic backgrounds. The centre's goal is to support non-English majors from local universities in achieving standardised English certifications, including TOEIC and IELTS, to meet the graduation requirements set by Vietnam's Ministry of Education and Training. Learners at this centre typically enter with low-intermediate English proficiency, generally scoring between 250 and 300 on the TOEIC test or 3.0-3.5 on the IELTS test. They join courses here to reach at least 550 on the TOEIC and/or 5.0 on the IELTS, benchmarks often required for university graduation and job readiness. As observed and reviewed by the centre's teachers, one of their most challenging classes is English listening. In addition, like any other language centre in Vietnam, most teachers at this centre work part-time alongside their tenure jobs at schools or universities, and classroom resources are highly dependent on the language centre's financial and professional resources. Thus, this centre provides a representative and relevant context for examining the factors that influence the acquisition of English listening skills in the Vietnamese EFL context.

The participants were 264 non-English majors at the centre. The researchers chose convenience sampling because of the diverse learners enrolled at the centre, as mentioned above. The fact that they participated in different academic programs at their own universities and attended English courses with varying language levels and personal backgrounds would provide a holistic view of the research population. Also, this sample size meets the criteria for a correlation analysis with multiple predictors and helps detect medium effects (Field, 2018). Employing such a sampling strategy, the study captured multifaceted trends through the survey and gathered deeper insights through correlation analysis.

Design of the study

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design, using correlational and regression analyses to examine and predict relationships among seven learner-related factors and listening skill acquisition. This research was to test and predict the relationships between specific learner-related variables and listening acquisition using statistical techniques. This approach led to objective, generalizable results for correlational and regression analyses, whereas mixed methods in this case might have added unnecessary complexity and subjectivity, hindering the study's predictive goals. The primary research instrument was a student survey.

In detail, for data collection, the researchers conducted a structured survey to measure the seven key factors identified in the literature review. Using a five-point Likert scale, the survey comprised 35 items covering seven key internal and external areas affecting learners' acquisition of listening skills. The items were adapted from previous studies (Gardner, 1985; Nation & Newton, 2009; Oxford, 1990; Trang, 2020; Vandergrift, 2007) to ensure that the questions were both reliable and valid. The sample was 264 non-English majors at the aforementioned language centre. The variables included seven independent variables (key affective factors) and one dependent variable (listening skill acquisition). The analysis techniques employed were Pearson correlation (for relationship analysis) and multiple regression (for predictive outcomes).

Data collection and analysis

The survey was conducted in early 2025 with 264 students via an online Google Form. The quantitative data were then processed with SPSS version 27. The descriptive statistics provided an overview of trends from the seven key variables. The researchers then employed Pearson's correlation to examine the relationships among these factors and listening skill acquisition, identifying their strengths and directions. After that, a multiple regression analysis further clarified how specific variables affect learners' acquisition of listening skills. Therefore, all the data analysis helped identify patterns, find correlations, and see which factors were most predictive of strong listening skill acquisition. The data is available upon reasonable request.

Results

Research question 1: How do non-English majors perceive factors affecting their English listening skill acquisition?

For items 1-5 in Table 1, the mean values ranged from 3.14 to 3.21, which shows that the learners are moderately motivated. They generally recognised the importance of listening skills for academic or career benefits (M=3.21), but there is a slight lack in active goal-setting and emotional engagement (e.g., item 3: M=3.14). The SD was 0.974-1.021, which also shows moderate variability, indicating diverse levels of personal motivation.

For items 6-10, the mean range was 3.30-3.42. The learners reported slightly above average cognitive competence in handling English audio. Maintaining focus despite distractions (M=3.42) got the highest score, while memory and speed of comprehension were lower. The SD range was 0.968-1.098. This moderate variability also suggests differences in their working

memory, focus, and inferencing abilities.

Table 1

Statistics of the internal factors perceived by non-English majors (N=264)

Internal factors	Mean	SD
Motivation		
1. I am highly motivated to improve my English listening skills.	3.20	0.974
2. I enjoy listening to English because I find the topics and content interesting.	3.19	1.021
3. I set personal goals to track my progress in English listening.	3.14	1.019
4. I believe that improving my listening skills will benefit my future studies or career.	3.21	1.002
5. When I feel unmotivated, it becomes harder for me to complete listening tasks.	3.19	1.002
Cognitive ability		
6. I can stay focused during English listening tasks, even when there are distractions.	3.42	0.968
7. I can remember key points after listening to English audio.	3.30	1.098
8. I can quickly understand the main idea of what I hear in English.	3.33	1.054
9. I struggle to follow when people speak too fast in English.	3.36	1.098
10. When I miss a word or phrase, I can guess its meaning from the context.	3.34	1.078
Language proficiency		
11. I don't understand many of the words used in English listening activities.	3.57	0.969
12. I struggle to understand long English sentences with difficult grammar.	3.55	1.042
13. I find it hard to understand spoken English because the pronunciation sounds different from what I expect.	3.72	1.056
14. I cannot follow fast English conversations because I don't know enough expressions or slang.	3.73	1.043
15. I find it hard to understand English because I haven't mastered the basic skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening.	3.72	1.119
Learning strategies		
16. I use listening strategies such as predicting, inferencing, or note-taking to improve my understanding.	3.77	0.929
17. I have been taught how to use specific strategies to improve English listening.	4.03	0.869
18. When I use listening strategies, I understand and remember information better.	3.94	0.861
19. I find listening tasks difficult because I'm unsure which strategies to use.	4.05	0.837
20. I plan my listening by thinking about the topic or predicting what I will hear.	4.10	0.866

For items 11-15, the mean values were from 3.55 to 3.73. The learners generally perceived low proficiency in listening as a challenge. Their highest concerns were unfamiliar expressions or slang (M=3.73) and pronunciation mismatches (M=3.72), which reveals their listening

comprehension was significantly hindered by poor pronunciation and informal language. The SD ranged from 0.969 to 1.119. A greater standard deviation here indicates that some students face more difficulties than those with core language knowledge.

For items 16-20, the mean range was 3.77-4.10, indicating that language strategies are the strongest internal factor. The learners used strategies and recognised their effectiveness. For example, item 20 (planning/predicting) got the highest score, 4.10. However, the high score on item 19 (4.05) also reveals some confusion about *which* strategy to apply, revealing a certain gap in their learning. The SD was 0.837-0.929, indicating the learners' consistency in their responses, which reflects their shared understanding or instruction in strategy use.

Table 2

Statistics of the external factors perceived by non-English majors (N=264)

External factor	Mean	SD
Teacher's practices		
21. My teacher provides clear guidance on how to improve my listening skills.	3.24	0.972
22. My teacher teaches me specific strategies to understand spoken English better.	3.28	1.067
23. I feel more confident during listening activities when my teacher provides structured support.	3.21	1.089
24. My teacher gives useful feedback that helps me recognise and fix my listening weaknesses.	3.33	1.140
25. My teacher uses a variety of listening activities that keep me engaged in class.	3.21	1.124
Classroom resources		
26. My class has access to high-quality listening materials (e.g., recordings, videos, podcasts).	3.48	1.079
27. The audio materials used in my class reflect real-life conversations.	3.34	1.142
28. Limited access to listening materials makes it harder for me to improve my listening skills.	3.56	1.162
29. Using a variety of listening materials helps me understand different accents and speech patterns.	3.48	1.176
30. My classroom includes both printed and digital resources for developing listening skills.	3.54	1.198
Out-of-class exposure		
31. I regularly listen to English through TV shows, movies, music, or online videos.	3.33	0.832
32. I interact with native or fluent English speakers outside of class.	3.34	0.957
33. I believe that exposure to English outside of school has improved my listening skills.	3.45	1.016
34. I do not have enough opportunities to practice listening outside of school.	3.58	0.987
35. I try to use English in real-life situations such as shopping, travelling, or chatting online.	3.44	0.941

For items 21-25 in Table 2, the learners considered their teachers moderately supportive in enhancing their listening development. The highest-rated factor is receiving useful feedback

(item 24: M = 3.33), and the teacher's structured support and engagement strategies score slightly lower (items 23 and 25: M = 3.21). The high SD range (0.972-1.140) indicates moderate to high variability, suggesting inconsistent teaching practices or perceptions across classes.

For items 26-30, the mean values ranged from 3.34 to 3.56, indicating learners' general awareness of the usefulness and availability of classroom resources. Among them, limited access is perceived as a challenge (item 28: M = 3.56). It showcases disparities in material availability across classrooms. The use of both printed and digital tools also scored high (item 30: M = 3.54). However, the SD values (1.079-1.198) revealed high variability, indicating that learners in some classes are better resourced than those in others.

For items 31-35, the mean range was 3.33 to 3.58. It specified the learners' moderate engagement with English outside the classroom. Limited opportunities (item 34: M = 3.58) got the highest score, showing a barrier. The learners reported their effort to use English in real-life contexts (item 35: M = 3.44), and believed in the helpfulness of media exposure (item 33: M = 3.45). The SD range was 0.832-1.016, which suggests more consistent experiences compared to those in the learners' classrooms.

Table 3

Statistical summary of internal and external factors perceived by non-English majors

Factor	Avg. Mean	Avg. SD
Motivation	3.19	1.004
Cognitive ability	3.35	1.059
Language proficiency	3.66	1.046
Learning strategies	3.98	0.872
Teacher's practices	3.25	1.0784
Classroom resources	3.48	1.1514
Out-of-class exposure	3.43	0.9466

Table 3 summarizes the factors students perceive as influential in their acquisition of listening skills. The factor of *learning strategies* was the most impactful (M=3.98), which suggests non-English majors value listening techniques. *Language proficiency* also scored high (M=3.66), revealing that vocabulary knowledge, grammar, and pronunciation are essential for effective listening. Whereas *motivation* received the lowest score (M=3.19), indicating a certain level of concern about learner engagement and drive. It means that though they understand it is important to improve their listening skills, they may not always feel motivated to do so. This is evident in Table 1 above, with moderate variability and diverse levels of personal motivation.

To maintain consistency in participants' responses, standard deviations provide insights into variability. The lowest (SD=0.872) was associated with *learning strategies*, showing strong agreement across them. Similarly, *out-of-class exposure* had relatively low variability (SD=0.9466), suggesting most students reported similar levels of interaction with English outside the classroom. However, *classroom resources* had the highest (SD=1.1514), revealing large differences in students' experiences of available and qualified listening materials due to different levels of support or access from different teachers.

In short, the variability leads to an important finding that the most impactful and consistent factor is the use of *learning strategies*, while the most unequal factor is access to *classroom resources*. It reveals that non-English majors can use listening strategies, but not all of them benefit equally from classroom environments. This is supported by the fact related to *teacher practices*. Although this factor was rated moderately (M=3.25, SD=1.0784), it indicated inconsistent instructional quality, possibly affecting learners' listening development. In addition, these results provide a quantitative foundation for exploring how seven factors as dependent variables interact to influence actual listening skill acquisition, as investigated in the subsequent correlation and regression analyses in the next section.

Research Question 2: What is the correlation between these factors and non-English majors' listening skill acquisition?

Table 4

Pearson correlation matrix

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Motivation	1							
2. Cognitive ability	0.665**	1						
3. Language proficiency	0.510**	0.363**	1					
4. Learning strategies	0.516**	0.726**	0.347**	1				
5. Teacher's practices	0.266**	0.734**	0.673**	0.620**	1			
6. Classroom resources	0.283**	0.412**	0.252**	0.486**	0.306**	1		
7. Out-of-class exposure	0.381**	0.310**	0.578**	0.614**	0.687**	0.561**	1	
8. Listening skill acquisition	0.486**	0.313**	0.323**	0.348**	0.448**	0.437**	0.725**	1

The Pearson correlation matrix in Table 4 illustrates the strength and direction of relationships among seven independent variables and the dependent variable - *listening skill acquisition*. All correlations marked with a double asterisk (**) are statistically significant at the $p < .01$ level, indicating strong and reliable associations in this learning context for non-English majors. The analysis of key correlations with *listening skill acquisition* reveals that several internal and external factors play moderate roles in affecting learners' abilities. The strongest positive correlation is found in *motivation* (r = 0.486), indicating that those who are more driven and goal-oriented tend to perform better in listening. The next is *teacher practices* (r = 0.449), showing that teachers' structured support, strategy instruction, and constructive feedback greatly benefit learners' listening development. Additionally, the factor of *learning strategies* (r = 0.349) points out a meaningful correlation, emphasising the importance of using metacognitive tools such as prediction and note-taking. Although *cognitive ability* (r = 0.314) and *language proficiency* (r = 0.323) demonstrate slightly lower correlations, they still make positive contributions, highlighting that combining attentional focus and linguistic competence supports learners' listening development.

Furthermore, the relationships among the independent variables indicate their interaction and support learners' acquisition of listening skills. The correlation between *cognitive ability* and *learning strategies* (r = 0.73) is strong, indicating that those with strong mental focus and good distraction control are more likely to use learning strategies effectively. The correlation between *language proficiency* and *teacher practices* (r = 0.67) is also high, indicating that competent instruction by teachers helps enhance learners' vocabulary and understanding of grammar. Additionally, *teacher practices* and *out-of-class exposure* (r = 0.69) correlate highly, indicating that supportive teachers help learners engage with English in real-world settings. There is also a moderate relationship between *learning strategies* and *out-of-class exposure* (r = 0.61), suggesting that learners with effective learning behaviours are more likely to have practice beyond the classroom. These interconnections reveal that it is important for non-English majors to have a holistic learning environment that develops their internal capability and external engagement.

Some variables showcased strong bivariate correlations with listening proficiency. However, they were not significant in the multivariate regression model due to multicollinearity. In fact, when predictor variables are highly interrelated, this can lead to shared variance, reducing each variable's contribution to the model.

Table 5

Multiple regression analysis predicting listening performance

Predictor	B (Coef.)	t-value	p-value
Motivation	0.164	4.75	0.000
Cognitive ability	0.179	5.86	0.000
Language proficiency	0.182	6.67	0.000
Learning strategies	0.181	4.51	0.000
Teacher practices	0.168	6.09	0.000
Classroom resources	0.145	4.97	0.000
Out-of-class exposure	0.112	3.72	0.000

R^2= 0.676, Adjusted R^2 = 0.652, F-statistic = 27.45, p < 0.001

The multiple regression analysis presented in Table 5 examines the extent to which seven predictor variables contribute to the variance in listening performance among non-English majors. It revealed a statistically significant model (R2=0.676,p<0.001)(R^2 = 0.676, p < 0.001). This indicates that the seven predictors together explain approximately 67.6% of the variance in learners' listening skill acquisition, suggesting strong explanatory power for a behavioural outcome and indicating that these seven internal and external factors are highly relevant to understanding non-English majors' listening development. Also, the adjusted R^2 of 0.652 affirms that the model retains its strength even after the number of predictors is adjusted.

In detail, *language proficiency* was the strongest contributor (B=0.182,p<0.001)(B = 0.182, p < 0.001), once highlighting that those with a better command of English vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation are likely to have better listening performance. In addition, *learning strategies* (B = 0.181) and *cognitive ability* (B = 0.179) were statistically significant, indicating

that those who actively use listening techniques and maintain attentional focus tend to better understand spoken English. These findings emphasise the importance of both linguistic and cognitive readiness in the acquisition of listening skills. For *motivation* (B = 0.164) and *teacher practices* (B = 0.168), both significantly influence learners' listening development, indicating that those with strong motivation and structured support, feedback, and strategy instruction from teachers are more engaged and successful. In case of *classroom resources* (B = 0.145) and *out-of-class exposure* (B = 0.112), they, though slightly lower in influence, still have meaningful contributions to the overall model. Their inclusion clarifies the importance of learning environments possessing authentic materials and interactive opportunities outside the classroom.

In brief, both internal and external factors significantly predict the acquisition of listening skills. Among them, *language proficiency, learning strategies,* and *cognitive ability* show the greatest influence. The results affirm the need for a balanced teaching approach emphasising learners' internal characteristics. External support systems should also be enhanced so that learners can enjoy diverse classroom materials and motivation-boosting activities, as well as be encouraged by high instructional quality and real-world practice.

Discussion

The triangulation of descriptive, correlational, and regression analyses provides a better understanding of the factors influencing listening skill acquisition. It highlights how individual learner factors, such as cognitive ability, language proficiency, and learning strategies, interact to predict listening skill development in EFL contexts. While traditional SLA theories emphasize input and interaction as found in Krashen (1982), the findings underscore the importance of internal learner variables in shaping outcomes, even when external conditions remain stable. These results suggest a more nuanced view of SLA in EFL settings, where constrained exposure to authentic input heightens the role of intrinsic and extrinsic factors in language acquisition. Also, in relation to prior research, the findings of this study are consistent with both international and Vietnamese studies on listening skill acquisition by

Although motivation's dominant role affirms its status as a foundational factor in language learning, influencing both strategy use and persistence (Dörnyei, 2001), the participants in this study showed a slight lack of active goal-setting and emotional engagement. Students' overall *language proficiency* was found to be a key factor in their success in listening tasks. This supports Krashen's (1982) argument that a strong foundation in vocabulary and grammar enables learners to benefit from listening practice. The role of language proficiency in aiding comprehension also confirms the findings of Nation and Newton (2009), who emphasised vocabulary and grammar knowledge as core components of successful listening. For *learning strategies*, the study echoes Vandergrift and Goh's (2012) argument that teaching metacognitive listening strategies enhances learners' awareness and control over their listening processes.

Similarly, *teacher practices and classroom resources* got lower scores, highlighting limitations in the unequal quality of teacher instruction and technological and material support for listening practice in some class settings, which is a common phenomenon in many language centres in Vietnam. This may be due to limited technological integration or overreliance on traditional teaching aids, as reported in other EFL contexts (Kweon & Spolsky, 2018). At the same time, how teachers approach listening instruction also makes a difference. The results show that students benefit when they are taught specific strategies, like predicting content or taking notes, alongside exposure to a variety of listening texts. This supports earlier work by Vandergrift (2007) and Goh (2000), who emphasised the need for teachers to guide learners through the process of understanding spoken English. Interestingly, the study found that just having access to *classroom resources* wasn't enough to boost listening performance. What really counts is how those resources are used - by both teachers and students - to create meaningful learning experiences. The relatively lower ratings for *classroom resources* also align with Ngo and Ha's (2022) findings that many Vietnamese schools still face challenges in providing adequate listening materials and technological tools, particularly in under-resourced areas. For *out-of-class exposure*, the finding supports Trang's study (2020). In Vietnam, this connection becomes even more meaningful, as many students supplement their classroom learning with independent activities, such as watching videos on YouTube, using mobile learning apps, or listening to English podcasts. These self-directed habits outside the classroom play a noticeable role in boosting listening skills, reflecting current shifts toward more flexible and informal ways of language learning.

The results from the Pearson correlation matrix revealed that all seven independent variables play significant roles in influencing the development of English listening skills among non-English majors. This perception was consistent across the sample. While the importance of motivation as a foundational element in successful language learning (Gardner, 1985), it got a moderate average with a high SD. This means non-English majors need motivation-boosting activities. However, this factor got the strongest correlation, showing that learners who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to seek out listening opportunities, overcome comprehension difficulties, and reflect on their progress. This result mirrors those in Nguyen (2023), who found that Vietnamese learners with strong motivation were more likely to engage in self-directed listening practice. The *out-of-class exposure* finding supports Rost (2011) and Field (2008), who argued that regular engagement with real-world listening materials, such as music, films, podcasts, and online content, enhances learners' comprehension and fluency. For *language proficiency*, the result matches Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982), which posits that input must be comprehensible and that learners with greater language knowledge are better positioned to benefit from listening exposure. The correlation of the two factors, *listening strategies* and *teacher practices*, is consistent with what researchers like Vandergrift and Goh (2012) have pointed out - the way teachers support metacognitive awareness and guide learners through listening challenges plays a significant role in developing strong comprehension skills. The factor of *classroom resources* aligns with the growing view that how resources are used - through guided interaction, learner autonomy, or multimodal engagement - is more critical than the resources themselves (Oxford, 1990; Trang, 2020).

The results of the multiple regression analysis predicting listening performance in Table 5 also highlight the importance of the seven factors. For *motivation*, the result reinforces theoretical perspectives such as Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model and Dörnyei's (2001) L2 motivation theory, both of which highlight motivation as a driving force in language skill development. Motivation not only encourages students to persist in the face of listening challenges but also increases their willingness to seek out and engage with English input, both in and out of the classroom. For *language proficiency*, the finding supports the views of Field (2008) and Rost (2011)**,** who advocate for extensive, authentic exposure as a means to enhance comprehension skills. For out-of-class exposure, the respondents' kind of self-directed, informal learning is becoming more common and effective, echoing insights from researchers like Rost (2011) and Trang (2020), who emphasise the value of extending language practice beyond traditional classroom walls. The prediction of *learning strategies* and *teacher practices* is consistent with Vandergrift and Goh's (2012) emphasis on the value of strategic competence in effective listening instruction. Whereas the findings from the two factors, *classroom resources* and *cognitive ability*, diverge somewhat from the emphasis on their roles in language processing as noted by Vandergrift (2007), they also indicate that students may compensate for cognitive or resource limitations through motivation or independent learning efforts.

In short, the correlational analysis showed statistically significant positive relationships between all independent variables and listening skill acquisition, with *motivation*, *language proficiency*, and *out-of-class exposure* demonstrating particularly strong correlations ($p < .01$, two-tailed). Furthermore, multiple regression analysis revealed that these three variables were also significant predictors of students' listening performance, underscoring their combined influence on learner outcomes. The results suggest that both internal factors (such as learners' mindset and linguistic competence) and external conditions (such as access to authentic input outside the classroom) are crucial in shaping learners' ability to understand spoken English effectively. All of the findings above can be interpreted within the aforementioned second-language acquisition theories. The significant role of *motivation* supports Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model, which asserts that motivated learners invest more effort and time in language learning tasks. Similarly, the importance of *language proficiency* and *cognitive ability* aligns with Anderson's (1983) cognitive theory, which emphasises the role of vocabulary knowledge, attention, and working memory in processing and understanding spoken input. The strong prediction of *out-of-class exposure* also reinforces Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis, highlighting the need for ongoing access to comprehensible English input in authentic, real-life contexts. Furthermore, the moderately high scores for *teacher practices* and *learning strategies* suggest that classroom-based support and strategy training are instrumental, though potentially underutilised or inconsistently implemented.

Conclusion

This study set out to understand the different factors that shape how non-English-majored university students at an English centre in Vietnam develop their English listening skills. Using a survey with 264 learners, the research explored seven main areas: motivation, cognitive ability, language proficiency, learning strategies, teacher practices, classroom resources, and

out-of-class exposure. The findings showed that each of these plays an important role and highlighted the need for a more learner-focused English education in settings such as those in private English centers in Vietnam with similar learner profiles.

Overall, this study contributes to the existing body of research by confirming the multifactorial nature of listening skill development and emphasising the need to support learners both in and out of the classroom. It reinforces the importance of adopting a holistic pedagogical approach - one that not only strengthens students' linguistic and cognitive skills but also provides motivating, resource-rich, and strategy-informed learning environments. These insights are particularly relevant in the Vietnamese EFL context, where disparities in educational infrastructure and student exposure to authentic English input continue to affect learning outcomes.

The research also had a few limitations when conducted at a single language centre. The findings might not fully reflect the full picture of what learners in other institutions or regions have experienced, especially those in rural areas or public universities with fewer resources. Also, the study was conducted over a limited period using a student questionnaire as the primary research instrument; thus, it could not track changes in students' listening skills or learning habits over time. Despite these limitations, the study offers practical insights into key factors that support or hinder learners' listening skill acquisition and points to useful strategies for both teachers and learners.

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