An Exploration of Listening Teaching, Learning Problems and Their Causes at Ho Chi Minh City University of Food Industry during Covid-19

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ABSTRACT

Teachers, students, and academics working with English as a second language (L2 English) have long considered listening the hardest skill to master. It has also gotten the least attention in second language acquisition and has been the least studied of the four language abilities. Using several viewpoints, during the Covid 19 era at Ho Chi Minh City University of Food Industry, this research evaluated the causes of hearing problems faced by HUFI learners at the pre-intermediate level. The study's ultimate purpose was to develop a research-based methodology to assist these students in improving their listening comprehension abilities by contributing to the knowledge of the nature of listening comprehension and the causes of issues they confront. The study looked into terms of lexical processing and spoken word recognition, learners' views, performance in phonological vocabulary exams, and recognition of words by dictation transcription, as well as learners' self-reflection after one semester of learning and instruction. Lecturers, Training Programs, Facilities, Application of Information Technology, and Support Services all have good effects on the quality of teaching English listening competence at the institution, according to the findings. The qualitative method was used to find reliable data for this research.

Keywords: English teaching, teaching quality, quality of teaching English listening skill, online teaching

Introduction

Starting from April 2021, coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has posed one of the greatest challenges to humankind. Many companies, as well as schools, have been locked down in Vietnam. They have faced a really difficult time. To help students keep updated in their studies, the government has suggested a way to study for all schools by using long-distance learning. This way has shown effectiveness in stopping the community transmission of COVID-19. HUFI has chosen Zoom and Microform platforms to guide students. However, they also produced adverse impacts on the students studying. Listening skill is one of the specific examples. So, teaching and learning listening skills at HUFI during the period of Covid 19 is a

matter of concern for teachers of English. Many teachers and students have met some difficulties in teaching and learning through online classes. Based on these problems, the researcher thinks that the disparity between the importance of English listening and the difficulties in current English teaching and learning methods is a practical reason (listening comprehension) LC. The value of this skill, listening, has a long history of being overlooked compared to the other three skills, maybe because of the problems it offers to students and teachers. Thus, listening skill needs to be taught communicatively more pleasantly and interestingly to encourage students to study more effectively and successfully. That is the researcher's target of this innovation.

The research began with cultural contexts, then the literature review, followed by the description of the innovation implementation engaging students in studying English. Near the end of the paper, the findings and analyses were presented in order to get the best possible results in the invention.

Literature review

Listening has been guided in language classrooms for nearly 50 years and is considered one of the four fundamental abilities, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). It is, however, "typically the weakest competence for many language learners, and it has received the least help in the L2 classroom" (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012, p13). Changes in the pedagogy of teaching listening comprehension have recently occurred. Text-oriented instruction, communication-oriented instruction, learner-oriented training, and metacognitive instruction are some of the methods used. (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).

Hinkel (2006) summarizes the general tendency in present English education and learning as a second language (L2). Four factors, she claims:

combine to affect current perspectives on the teaching of English around the world: (a) the decline of methods, (b) a growing emphasis on both bottom-up and top-down skills, (c) the creation of new knowledge about English, and (d) integrated and contextualized teaching of multiple language skills (p.109)

Listening is a skill that people use their receiving skills to learn about the world (Wilt, 1950; Gilman & Moody, 1984). Furthermore, listening comprehension has been considered a crucial component in the research of second language acquisition (SLA) since the late 1800s (Field, 1998, 2008; Rost, 2001, 2011). Rost (2002) thinks that listening to English provides a route for teachers "for drawing learners' attention to new forms (vocabulary, grammar, interaction patterns) in the language" (p141). It is therefore critical to investigate how to improve the beneficial effect of listening skills instruction in English acquisition. In summary, hearing is "a skill that appears to develop effortlessly when listening in one's native tongue, but demands substantial work when listening in a foreign language" (Underwood, 1989, p1). As a result of the problems that the skill poses, there is some insufficient listening instruction to English learners, as well as in its evaluation and study. Because students' listening is not always

correctly measured, their flaws are not always visible; as a result, the methodology of the classroom is vital, and the listening lesson has been little explored, examined, or challenged. According to Field (2008), 'in many schools, listening receives insufficient attention, and learners frequently lack ongoing support to lead them through the process of becoming better listeners". Goh and Vandergrift (2021) say that teachers might be "unsure how to teach listening in a principled manner." Alkire, Scott. (2002) also states:

dictation has been used in language learning for several hundred years, and methodologies have often made pedagogical claims for its value ."Mozhgan Alsadat Ghaffarzadeh Hassankiadeh says that "through the use of dictation as a learning tool by guiding teachers in conducting acceptable approaches in foreign/second language classrooms may benefit both instructors and learners in enhancing language abilities. (p 129, 133)

Compared to the other language abilities, listening has its own characteristics and expectations. Listening skill is the most challenging skill among other skills, says Field (2007), because there are no regular pauses between words like there are when reading. Listening is a transitory and fleeting activity. As a result, according to Field, this is impossible in such a short time for listeners to divide related speech into different terms. 'The transient character of listeners tends to be more concerned with the quality of their hearing. Pham Manh Tri et al. (2022) also say that many students struggle to study online courses because of their internet and get ineffective and annoying. (p18)

Research questions

The researcher conducted this study hoping to discover the most effective method for making long-distance listening courses more meaningful and engaging. This study addresses the following research questions:

- 1. What are the main challenges in LC that HUFI learners at the pre-intermediate level face through long-distance learning?
- 2. What content and function words do learners recognize through long-distance learning?

Methods

Pedagogical setting & participants

Personal motivation:

The researcher's students always met a lot of difficulties in studying this skill, especially during the period of Covid-19, which directly motivated her to choose this one to study. She began her fieldwork in April 2021. Her students were supposed to learn how to listen on their own because listening is a skill that can only be learned rather than taught and when students practice, they will develop this one. She saw that many English teachers were bewildered when they couldn't come up with appropriate teaching approaches and ideas to help their pupils improve their listening abilities. She also discovered that even when students could recognize all of the words by sight, they were

impossible to properly comprehend the significance of messages delivered by video or audio speakers in class. In the first semester, the researcher taught two pre-intermediate classes. For the sake of validity, she used a mixed methods classroom approach in her study.

Using a variety of teaching models and approaches, with a focus on listening, encouraging the use of computer and web-based information technology to meet social needs, international exchanges as well as promoting learners' general cultural awareness should be addressed in particular, according to the HUFI trend. Listening appears to have been emphasized to an unprecedented high degree in HUFI's English education as a result of this policy shift. The value of educating and learning the listening skill has long been recognized. This study's research participants were chosen randomly from first-year students based on a large-scale placement test held in September 2021, taking online classes. The choice is made at random. She chose them as participants because seventy-five percent of the freshman were at the pre-intermediate level based on their placement exam results; this represents the majority of first-year students. It reflects the current state of HUFI in the English language classroom. After the pupils had studied English for one term over the internet, data was collected from them. Two whole classrooms with a total of 84 students were chosen at random from a pool of pre-intermediate classes. They agreed to take part in her research.

To begin with her positionality, there could be a problem in this study was that the participants may have felt obligated to cooperate: they may have been concerned that the researcher would evaluate them based on whether or not they participated in her research; and that if they chose not to participate, they would receive a low grade in their English class. The researcher was unaware of the issue until she started the pilot study. She removed the area of the questionnaire survey that asked for students' personal information, such as their name and student code, to calm their nerves. As a result, in the primary study, the questionnaires were kept anonymous to guarantee that participants may share their opinions without fear of being recognized or penalized. Second, as an insider researcher with dual responsibilities in the data collection process, the researcher experienced the research issue of role bias. It was difficult for her to distinguish between her roles between an English teacher and a researcher. She then went on to work as an insider researcher.

Because she would have gradually created rapport with her students, her views and practice as an English teacher would necessarily or unconsciously influence their perspective of their English learning and assessment of her involvement. Later, in her fieldwork, she was confronted with an ethical problem when students asked her the way to follow up listening to foreigners' voices after they had learned so much. The researcher had an obligation as a teacher to respond to them. However, as a researcher, she was hesitant to tell them her answers because it was what she was investigating with their help. She resolved not to push her viewpoints on them but to keep such matters open to debate and to assist them in synthesizing some helpful ideas. As a result, she limited her impact on the teaching and data collection processes.

Lastly, she was very familiar with her research setting as she has worked here for over 20 years and is well-versed in the scientific field, which may result in diverse research outcomes. According to Kleinman and Copp (1993), researchers saved time and energy by becoming familiar with both the research sites and the backgrounds of the research participants. However, familiarity can lead

researchers to draw conclusions without giving enough thought. When outlining the researcher's functions, she began by describing her dual job as a researcher, and a teacher explained what she would do. It appeared that research bias was unavoidable, and she needed to be aware of this and take steps to mitigate it.

To make triangulation of data and results easier, this study used data from the following two sources: (1) A questionnaire survey of university students about causes of listening difficulties; (2) dictation assessments at the beginning and end of the term. She will explain and understand the data gathering, reduction, and selection processes in these three phases in the next subsection.

Dictation transcriptions were undertaken in the classroom to evaluate students' listening problems using spoken word recognition in the text. Dictations are referred to as pragmatic tests because they "demand time-constrained processing of the meanings contained in discourse" (Oller, 1979, p263). Buck (2001) demonstrates that the listening skills required for dictation are "probably just word recognition" (p77). As a result, dictation and transcription tests are useful for determining the extent to which students can recognize spoken words.

Because of the fundamental nature of dictation, these tests were used in all three ways. In LC, transcription (Angelis 1974; Kelley 1991) and dictation can be used to assess students' ability to recognize spoken words in class (Bonk 2000). Pemberton (1995) also recommends transcription and dictation as useful research tools since they may be used to "find out the specific roots of listening problems (LPs), which message-oriented tasks like note-taking cannot" (p179).

The dictation test was used extensively in the study because it "represents the entire range of skills needed in successful listening" and "engages the learner in the real-time sequential processing of speech, as in everyday listening" (Pemberton, 2004, p 18) Although it has previously been criticized for being too simple an exam (Lado, 1961). Other research, on the other hand, has very different results. Pemberton (2004), for example, praises the many benefits of dictation, noting that it is critical in revealing students' true listening abilities. As a result, dictation was fully realized in this research.

Transcription was another important tool that demonstrated its value and use in her research. In this way, it differs from the inherent characteristics of the spoken class. 'However, transcribing can enable researchers to observe how the student has 122 interpreted the entire passage in a manner that other assessments cannot' (Pemberton, 2004). Based on the learners' cognitive processes will provide natural evidence that can be used to investigate their own ideas to process spoken word recognition (SWR) in more detail.

The students' dictation and transcribing performance are significant in demonstrating their true skills. When they got bad marks, it implied not only a difficulty in following common English terms but also a lack of understanding, according to previous studies (Pemberton, 2004; Gao, 2008). Writing dictation is a useful technique to keep up with specific information of the message or conversation, while message-oriented tasks like note-taking cannot achieve (Pemberton, 1995, p179). Following each chunk of dictation, a questionnaire was used to ensure that dictation was effective. The goal was to determine the students' online LPs as well as the perceived sources of

these issues. Each dictation text has 18 parts at the basic and pre-intermediate levels. This skill is a good technique for students and teachers to figure out what's causing their actual LPs in the dictation texts.

Design of the study

The researcher decided to provide two ways in the study with the following revised data: (1) the questionnaire survey, which was revised to include participants' listening difficulties as well as the reasons for those difficulties; and (2) two dictation texts adapted from progressive skill textbooks at the foundation and pre-intermediate levels. To get data for the research, the qualitative method was used to complete this one.

Data collection and analysis

Based on the results of the questionnaire, new reasons for hearing issues have been added.

Group 1: Finding it difficult to differentiate words from a continuous stream of speech

- Difficult to pay attention when listening to the English passage because it is too quickly.
- How do I know to pronounce the words correctly?
- I don't keep up with the words I just heard

Group 2: I'm having trouble determining the words and phrases the speaker emphasizes

• The speed of speaking is too quick to catch

Group 3: Have trouble picking up the ends of words

- can't recognize the word endings
- can't recognize the ends of words

Group 4: Having trouble recognizing words even when I know them in writing

• Finding it difficult to focus when listening to English

Group 5: Have trouble correctly distinguishing each word.

- Not be sure how to pronounce the words correctly.
- Practice little Group

Group 6: Have trouble grasping the passage's vocabulary.

- Have no idea the meanings of the words.
- I am not conversant in English.

Group 7: Having trouble understanding the grammar

• The speaker speaks too quickly for dictation texts and self-reflection reports to be heard.

Students mentioned issues with listening throughout their dictations. The 84 students took these dictations and provided feedback on their listening challenges. The students were initially given

some questions on awareness of hearing issues and their reasons in the English class during the second week of the new semester. Before the survey began, the researcher explained the survey's goals and significance to the students, assuring them that it was not an exam and that they may complete it anonymously and without regard for their grades. She stated that they were not concerned about the survey and they should only express their true thoughts and opinions without reservation. The majority of the students completed the questions in less than thirty minutes.

In the morning of the second week, the researcher gave two classes of participants a dictation test of the core text. The pre-intermediate dictation was then completed the next morning on the same individuals in the same language course. The dictation tests were conducted using the following methods:

Participants were given a practice passage to acquaint themselves with the technique before the actual test. This one was audio with a short description of some pictures read by the same speaker. The participants were then given three chances to listen to the official dictation passages. They listened and wrote down without pausing, but during the pause between every two chunks, they were instructed to write down quickly, as well as their instant replies to their listening difficulties for each chunk. It takes roughly 30 minutes to complete the operation for each dictation manuscript. After one semester, for the purpose of the post-dictation test of training, she did not show any transcripts to the participants after the dictation exam.

Findings and discussion

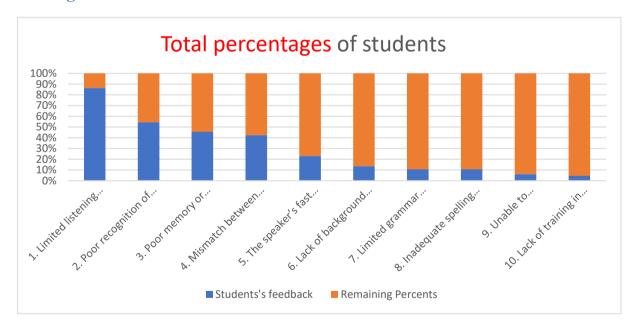


Chart 1: Students' dictations revealed that they had difficulty listening.

As can be seen from the chart above, many students identified low listening vocabulary as one of their challenges, and the internet transmission affected the process of listening to the lesson, with 71 out of 84 reporting it. That is, the majority of students (85%) cited this as the reason for their

difficulties, followed by poor recognition of linking forms of weak forms in the unbroken flow of speech, which was cited by 54.5 percent of students. This indicates that the kids still require fundamental language skills training, such as expanding their vocabulary and improving their pronunciation. This first issue drew the attention of both researchers and students. However, the researcher intended to place a greater focus on reading individual words rather than poor form pronunciation in chunks of the English language. So, how can the researcher provide students with greater practice with word pronunciation in a real-world setting?

The third reason mentioned in their reports was a bit more convoluted because it encompassed several factors, but it was mostly related to the students' short recall of a huge block of words when processing a message. Many people claimed that when they started listening for the following portion, they forgot about the first part or that they could not afford to listen to the next section because they could not stop focusing on the first one. The stasis of message absorption was caused by the delayed response to the continual stream of speech. There were 38 students (45.5%) in this category who raised this concern. It is important to point out that this could be a major issue for L2 learners, even bigger than what has been revealed so far. This is due to the fact that the pupils studied in this project were at a lower level of English learning and had a limited vocabulary. They might have found it necessary to know how to integrate individual words into cohesive meaning and how to use their memory if they had a larger vocabulary. To become fluent listeners, pupils needed more intensive chunk training practice. With 42.4 percent and 23 percent, respectively, the fourth and fifth challenges suggested in this study are barriers between the native speaker's speech and the listeners' poor capacity to follow the words. The former represented the listeners' pronunciation, while the latter demonstrated their inability to keep up with native speakers' natural pace.

Based on the foregoing, the researcher hypothesized that a training program would be beneficial because it would support learners to be proficient in spoken word recognition (SWR) through phonological training. As some previous researchers said about the importance of listening skills in literature review as well as methodology. Alkire, Scott. (2002) also states: "dictation has been used in language learning for several hundred years, and methodologies have often made pedagogical claims for its value. According to Pham Manh Tri et al. (2022), many students have difficulties in studying online courses because of the internet, and they get ineffective and annoying. (p18). Because of the online class, she started to use a variety of ways to help students by creating a Zalo group. She sent one or two audios to this group first, and then she asked them to practice listening more at home to be familiar with the speakers' voices. Each audio will be chosen carefully from the materials like IELTS, TOEIC, or TOEFL. When the class started to study, she called some random students to submit the homework through the Zalo group. Using this method helps students to be active in listening and makes it easy to listen to the audio without internet transmission. If they did well, they could get good points. The students were eager to cooperate with the researcher. Another way is that after finishing the listening skill of that day, the researcher designed all the parts studied in the class by using gap-filling, true, false questions, or answering the questions, listening, and describing the pictures. This way helped them recall all the knowledge

that they might forget or could not hear in the class due to the internet. She also observed her students by asking them to reply directly to see what they understood. After three months, the students improved significantly.

The researcher later developed a curriculum for a one-semester intervention program based on the results of these surveys, which were administered to address the identified hearing impairments. At the end of the course, there were two different tests at different skill levels were conducted 84 after the intervention program to see the influence of one-semester education on SWR. She delivered the participants a transcript of the text after each dictation and asked them to underline any words they did not understand and double-check the items of explanations in the questionnaire for each chunk to determine the causes of these LPs. Pemberton (2004), for example, praises the many benefits of dictation, noting that it is critical in revealing students' true listening abilities. From the previous points, the researcher chooses dictation in teaching listening skills and applies some applications to guide students. Following the dictation and identification of chunk listening issues, participants were given a post-dictation questionnaire survey on one-semester instruction to complete right away. The entire process took less than an hour, from dictation to evaluation of the creation program.

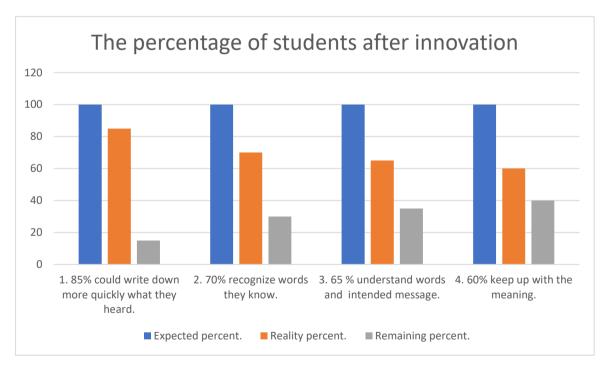


Chart 2: Students' dictations shown after innovation

From the above chart, after innovation, the percentage of students has been improved in studying listening skills, and they could write down more quickly. This has been shown with the percentage of 85. This number can be valuable evidence. The lowest percentage was 60, but this percentage also provides that the students can keep up with the meaning well. So, the researcher thinks that it is necessary to change the ways to adapt students' needs in studying listening skills. Students will study the other skills better if they study listening skills well. It leads to studying English effectively.

Conclusion

Study Limitations

This study was carried out on a small scale by interviewing and doing the dictation test for 84 students at HUFI as an experimental unit, and the results showed students could not prove the difficulties and challenges that all students have been coped with the listening skill. Though this study has limitations and difficulties, the researcher did her best to overcome and adapt students' expectations to improve teaching listening skills. She learned a lot from this study good and bad points. Teachers also use a variety of platforms and are good at technology to adapt the study online effectively, Pham and Nghiem (2022, p 321- 322). That is true "one must learn by doing the thing, for though you think you know it – you have no certainty; until you try" (Sophocles, 400 B.C.E, cited in Roger 1983:163).

Recommendations

The author proposes a number of recommendations on the impact of factors on the quality of teaching listening at the period of Covid 19 at HUFI as follows.

Teachers need to have small test techniques in the teaching process, then feedback those results to students. The selection of highly qualified teachers and good lesson preparation are important factors in creating a professional image in the minds of English learners at HUFI. Teachers need to pay attention and grasp the learning status of each student in order to make additional adjustments to the lesson to suit the needs of students. Teachers need to create close, friendly relationships and discuss lessons in order to prove the quality and effectiveness of learning.

Applying teaching methods to promote students' positivity, initiative, and creativity, developing students' self-study and teaching thinking ability.

The university needs to ask lecturers to combine information technology and a variety of methods to improve teaching quality with the needs of learners and applicants: The university needs to use the program in a practical direction, design more program content specializing in details, and prepare good platforms as standard zooms, Microsoft team .. to support online teaching and learning effectively.

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Biodata

My full name is Tong Thi Hue, I have been a lecturer for 22 years. I am in charge of guiding listening skills, and British Culture. I have been working for Ho Chi Minh City University of Food Industry for 22 years. My field of interest covers a large variety of innovations related to teaching English.