

## Investigating the Effects of Mass Media on Learning Listening Skills

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### Abstract

This research aims to investigate university students' problems and reasons and find solutions to the problems. The researcher utilized the questionnaire to investigate this kind of problem of 84 Faculty of Foreign Languages (FFL) sophomores from class 20AV01 and conducted paired samples T-test on one of the classes, which consisted of 22 participants in the experimental group within a month. The findings show that FFL sophomores- their listening ability, in general, was lower than expected since a considerable number of them could only understand simple and slow English utterances. The lack of vocabulary and pronunciation knowledge and in respect of speaker factors, "informal language", "fast and instant speech", and "the accents" from the speaker are the main causes of their failure to understand English utterances. The Paired-Samples T-test results revealed a significant difference between the pretest and post-test scores ( $r=0.529$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), and on average, the post-test scores were 14.3 points higher than the pretest scores. This finding suggests the importance of vocabulary and pronunciation in English listening and self-study through mass media should be taken into more concern.

**Keywords:** listening problems, mass media, EFL learners, language learning

### Introduction

It is undeniable that English has become an important and dominant global language. Like all other languages, English is used for communication, but in the widest range – in countries to countries around the world. Among that, listening is considered to be a crucial skill and a key to good communication (Zelko, 2006). The ability to listen well is also considered helpful in improving the three other chief skills in learning English. The importance of listening is enormous because it has been considered the basis of every development of any other skills, which brings the first step to connecting with the target language and culture through it (Etman & Zaida, 2009). However, it is one of the most challenging skills which requires much more considerable effort when listening to a foreign language (Underwood, 1989) because listening in our mother language comes to us naturally and effortlessly.

There is a fact that learners find listening one of the greatest difficulties in learning English. In Binh Duong University (BDU), English major sophomores in the Faculty of Foreign Languages (FFL) may not be an exception. From the researcher's notice and observation, a large number of sophomores of the Faculty of Foreign Languages (FFL) admitted that they still have trouble with the listening subject and find it the hardest skill to master, although they have been studying plenty of listening periods in the school. Having learned English as a major, including the listening subject, these sophomores may hear many individual words, but they may also

encounter a wide range of problems with their listening skills, which makes them unable to understand the utterances as a whole. Therefore, it is essential to find their problems and the reasons for those problems.

The world is rapidly changing and bringing many benefits to make our lives easier and more effective. Every day, people of all ages around the world consume entertainment media such as the internet, television, games, and other forms of media. Therefore, it is a fruitful source for teachers and students to take advantage of in the process of teaching and learning English skills.

In order to improve learners' listening skills, there are a variety of approaches that can be taken. Because of its appropriation and diversity, mass media has been considered one of the most popular and efficient methods. It has been such an easy way to find mass media, which can be named as newspapers, radio, television, the internet, magazines, or more (Tafani, 2009). More specifically, mass media was classified into six specific types: text media, audio media, visual media, video, manipulative media, and people (Smaldino, Lowther, & Russell, 2012).

The worldwide availability of mass media makes a great contribution to helping teachers and students access information more conveniently. According to Tafani (2009), mass media allows students to experience and immerse themselves in a great number of learning practices employing different types of mass media such as magazines, radio, the internet, etc., which really enhance students' English skills. Furthermore, students' exposure to mass media plays an important role in the development of their learning habits and skills (John & Isabela, 2011).

The study mainly aims at identifying problems that FFL sophomores often encounter in listening comprehension. From this, some solutions to teaching and learning English listening skills are implemented to assist and improve the students' listening proficiency. Among them, learning with mass media (i.e., movies, songs, audiobooks, and news) is the key method of this study.

The research questions include:

RQ1. What are EFL students' problems in listening skills?

RQ2. Is mass media a solution to help EFL students enhance their listening skills?

## Literature review

### *Listening skills*

Nation (2008, p37) defined "listening is the natural precursor to speaking, the early stages of language development in a person's first language are dependent on listening" and "it gives learners information from which to build up the knowledge necessary for using the language" (p38). According to Underwood (1989, p1), listening occurs when we pay attention and try to catch meaning from what we hear, and a list of requirements for figuring out what speakers mean in a particular situation is a must.

Richards (2008) indicates that listening is generally and traditionally considered as listening comprehension, especially in most methodology manuals, since the main function of listening in second language learning is to facilitate understanding of spoken discourse. However, it is such a challenging area to understand or grasp listening comprehension in the process of acquiring language (Tran & Duong, 2020).

In short, hearing is a physical and passive process, while listening is an active process that requires attention and achievement of the meaning. It also requires a variety of language

knowledge, such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Regarding this research, it can be inferred that the troubled students only hear the utterances but have not reached to the listening comprehension stage.

### *The features of spoken English*

Understanding the differences between written language and spoken discourse can assist us in inferring the effects they might have on students who are learning to listen to English.

Firstly, Scarcella & Oxford (1992, p146) said spoken discourse happens “on the spot and instantaneously”. The listener must process the information immediately, and there is no chance to review it. Therefore, the listeners are required to have constant attention as the time to process information is much more limited than reading a text.

Secondly, the sounds of the language are also one of the most confusing features of spoken discourse. Underwood (1989) indicates that foreign listeners may fail to distinguish or even fail to hear sounds which are unknown or unusual to them. According to Underwood (1989, p. 10), They may find that “sounds are distorted, or elided, or lost altogether, as the speakers concentrate on the message rather than on their diction”. In addition, the variety of the speakers’ accents also contributes to the difficulty in understanding spoken texts Richards (2008).

Thirdly, stress and intonation place an important role in conveying the meaning of spoken English. As Underwood (1989, p10) states, "changing the stress can alter the meaning of an utterance even where the words remain the same". The problem of foreign learners is that they often learn the pronunciation of new words by hearing them clearly pronounced, once at a time, by the teacher, but many words seem to disappear completely in continuous speech. The reason is that English words usually have two kinds of pronunciation, a strong form, and a weak form.

Fourthly, “it is perhaps unfortunate for the non-native listener that spoken discourse is frequently not well organized” (Underwood, 1989, p12). According to Richards (2008), unlike written discourse, spoken discourse often contains many hesitations, false starts, reduced, ungrammatical or incomplete forms, redundancy, repetitions, pauses, and fillers for the listener to deal with.

Last but not least, informal language in spoken discourse also causes problems for foreign listeners since they have limited experience of the English language in informal situations. Informal language often contains a lot of colloquial words, expressions, and slang. Many words only appear in speaking, never in writing (Underwood, 1989).

### *Listening tasks and purposes*

According to Brown (2006, p5), "one of the reasons that approach to listening did not serve students very well was that they generally had no idea of why they were listening" until the teacher gave them the questions. Teachers can help students listen more effectively if spending some time teaching them about the purposes for listening. Suitable listening tasks such as listening for main ideas, listening for details and listening to make inferences should be provided. Nunan (1999) stated in designing tasks, and it is important to teach learners to adopt a flexible range of listening strategies.

Brown (2006, p5) defines that “listening for main ideas means that the listener gets a general idea of what is being said; the details are less important”. Teachers can get students to do this by asking them for a word or phrase that contains the gist. Learners can listen to the text several times, but Nunan (1999) suggests that this task occurs after the first time they listen.

In real-life listening, more than just understanding the topic is needed. Every day we need to listen for specific information. Therefore, teachers must require their students to listen for details as well. Scarcella & Oxford (1992, p146) stated in this task learners need to "pay selective attention to those details only and to filter out anything that does not relate directly to those particulars". Brown (2006) indicates that teachers can set this task by giving some eliciting questions to the students to figure out a specific detail in the listening text.

A third important reason for listening is listening and making inferences. That is, as Brown (2006, p6) points out, important aspects of meaning are sometimes implied rather than stated since speakers do not always say exactly and directly what they mean. Listeners have to "listen between the lines" to figure out what is really meant. This requires much of students' language background knowledge. Teachers can help students practice listening between the lines also by asking and eliciting questions so that students can infer the meaning themselves.

The idea of knowing the purpose of listening and presenting listening tasks is an extremely effective strategy to teach this skill, as it helps students develop a sense of why they listen and which skill to use to listen effectively. Brown (2006, p6) also said, "Teachers can build skills by asking students to focus on their reason for listening each time they listen". In short, if students know why they are listening, they are more focused, hence the increase in listening efficiency.

*Listening proficiency*

A large number of learners wonder how to listen effectively, and what methods they need to improve their listening skills. Despite their considerable effort in practicing listening, they still could not master this skill and call it the most difficult skill in English learning. To reveal their problems, it is necessary to understand some components that contribute to successful listening. According to Scarcella & Oxford (1992), listening proficiency relates to communicative competence. There are four elements of communicative competence: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence.

The following figure shows how listening proficiency relates to each of these:

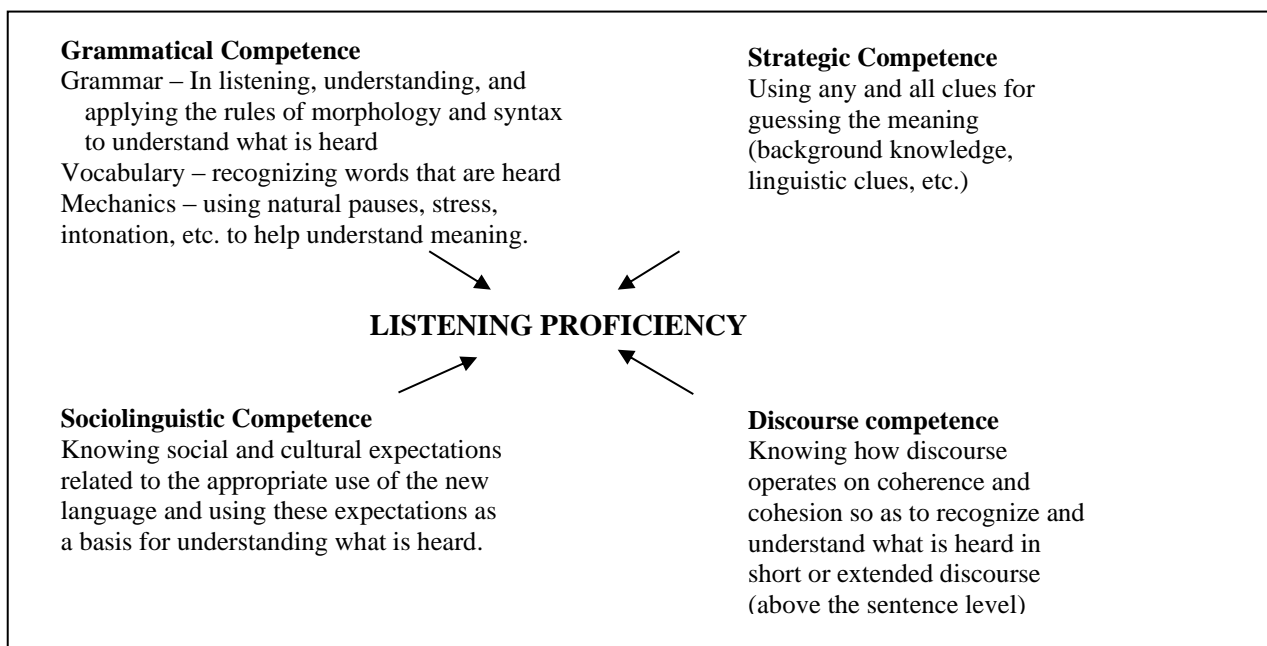


Figure 1. The Components Underlying Listening Proficiency

Figure 1 proposes that all of four elements play important roles in developing listening skills. Lack of any competence would lead to failure in comprehending spoken language. Therefore, it is vital for students to improve all competence to master this difficult skill. Useful detailed explanations for each of the components are given below.

### *Mass Media*

#### *What is mass media?*

Mass media refers to the developments in science and technology that are intended to reach a mass audience. The most common platforms for mass media are newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the internet. The general public typically relies on the mass media to provide information regarding political issues, social issues, entertainment, and news (Spitulnik, 1993), while eight main types of media were named in the book of Biagi (2013), including books, newspapers, magazines, recordings, radio, movies, television and the internet.

#### *Roles of mass media in EFL in learning and teaching English*

According to Yanar & Tutunis (2016), mass media materials can be easily accessed by learners and are practical for those who are not in the mood to participate in classroom activities or work distantly from campus. It is easier, faster, and more effective in improving learners' listening and speaking skills. These authors also suggested an urgent need to research the relationship between language and the media.

Mass media's effectiveness in developing English skills in general, and listening skills in particular, is strongly recommended (Tafani, 2009; John, 2011). Moreover, Michelle (2020) tested various forms of mass media on students' listening skills and concluded that their respondents exposed their preference for these sources, which significantly impacted the enhancement of their listening and other language skills. More specifically, the activities designed on the foundation of using mass media encourage students to reveal their creative literacy potential, the effort to share ideas and improve critical thinking (Ramani, 2018).

Using the internet is considered one of the mass media platforms, composed of thousands of platforms and internet-based foundations. Take YouTube as an example of how it can help students improve their listening skills. Truong & Le (2022) affirmed that with the use of Youtube, students are able to enhance their listening skills and obtain a great deal of new vocabulary and grammar knowledge. Moreover, they mentioned some significant functions, such as repetition cues, which can help students listen to the content as much as possible until they understand it.

Furthermore, according to Van, Dang, Pham, Vo, & Pham (2021), some others, such as educational apps, smartphones, and tablets, play an important role in helping students gain easier access to listening resources, which contributes to dramatically enhancing students' listening comprehension.

### **Methodology**

A quasi-experimental design was employed in this study in order to gain more reliable results in an educational context. The survey was used to find out the difficulties students encountered while learning listening skills, whereas a pretest and post-test were conducted to see how mass media improved listening skills for sophomores at BD University.

#### *Research setting and participants*

The research was conducted at Binh Duong University, located in Binh Duong City, at No.504, Binh Duong Avenue, Hiep Thanh Ward, Thu Dau Mot City. All of the students, who are

studying English in their third year at BDU, took part in the survey with a population of 84. As for the empirical research, one class of FFL sophomores, including 24 students, was chosen to be guided through the new learning experience. However, only 22 participants completed both the pretest and post-test.

Table 1. *Descriptive information about the participants in the survey*

<b>Survey</b>				
<b>Class Code</b>	<b>N. of students</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Date</b>
20AV01	24	Sophomore	20-21	January 12, 2019
20AV02	30			January 14, 2019
20AV03	30			January 12, 2019

Table 2. *Descriptive information of the participants in the pretest and post-test*

<b>Class Code</b>	<b>N of students</b>		<b>Date</b>	
20AV01	Pretest	Post-test	Pretest	Post-test
	22	22	March 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2019	March 29 <sup>th</sup> , 2019

### *Research instruments*

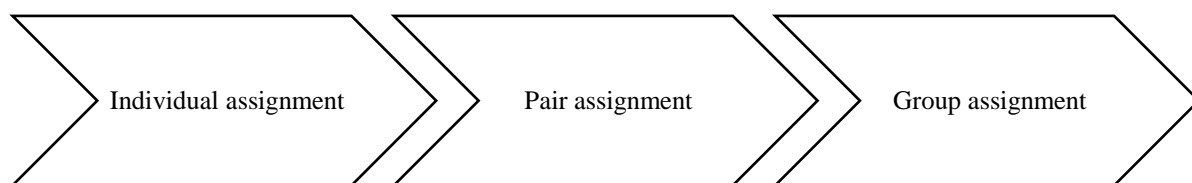
#### *Questionnaires*

To investigate students' problems in listening skills, the researchers employed a questionnaire with twelve items, of which the main content was derived from the literature review and previous studies. To ensure that the respondents are more honest and informative in their answers, their identities were kept anonymous and confidential. Moreover, the questionnaire delivered to the students is in Vietnamese to ensure that all students have clearly understood the questions and statements.

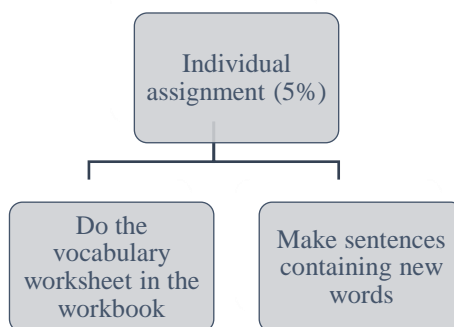
#### *Pre-test & post-test*

Subsequently, a pretest and post-test were conducted to see how effectively mass media enhanced students' listening skills at BU language faculty. The pretest was taken at the beginning of the course, and the post-test was after four weeks. The results were then analyzed using paired samples T-test to investigate the effect of this method of learning English listening.

Here are the Assignments for the course of LISTENING II



Individual assignment



Pair assignment

	Using the conversation of the lesson and follow the video
Voice recording (10%)	Speak with correct pronunciation and intonation

Group assignment

Table 3. *Group assignment conducted during a month*

Group assignment (5%)	
Week	Tasks
1	Watch an English movie and report what you have learned from them based on the teacher's guide
3	Listen to 3 English songs and report what you have learned from them based on the teacher's guide.
5	Watch 3 English game shows and report what you have learned from them based on the teacher's guide.
7	Watch/listen to 3 pieces of VOA Special English news and report what you have learned from them based on the teacher's guide.
9	Listen to/watch 3 English stories and report what you have learned from them based on the teacher's guide.

### *Data collection procedure*

The questionnaire regarding listening difficulties and strategies was prepared after the accomplishment of the Literature Review. Therefore, the content of the questions and suggested answers were accordingly based on the information from the Literature Review. The data for this study was collected on February 22, 2019, and the learners were approached in their usual classes.

The pretest for listening was conducted on March 1, 2019. It was the TOEIC Practice Test One, by Longman Preparation Series for the New TOEIC Test – More Practice Tests, since this kind of test consists of a variety of questions and topics for everyday situations. Therefore, it is considered a useful tool to measure the students' listening ability. After four weeks of learning English through four kinds of mass media, including movies, songs, audiobooks, and news, the students took the post-test, which is TOEIC Practice Test Three in Longman Preparation Series for the New TOEIC Test – More Practice Tests, on March 29, 2019.

The data from the questionnaire and tests was coded and analyzed descriptively using Microsoft Excel and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.

Table 4. *Date and types of tests conducted in the two stages*

Stage	Date	Types of tests
Pretest	March 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2019	TOEIC Practice Test 1- New TOEIC Test – More Practice Tests
Post-test	March 29 <sup>th</sup> , 2019	TOEIC Practice Test 3- New TOEIC Test – More Practice Tests

## **Findings and discussions**

### *Findings*

Research question 1: what problems have students encountered in listening skills?

To answer the first question, the researchers categorized the list of the questionnaire thematically as follow:

Table 5. *Thematic items categorized*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Items</b>
The problems students have encountered in listening skills	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
The solutions to improve students' listening skills	11, 12



*Speaker factors*

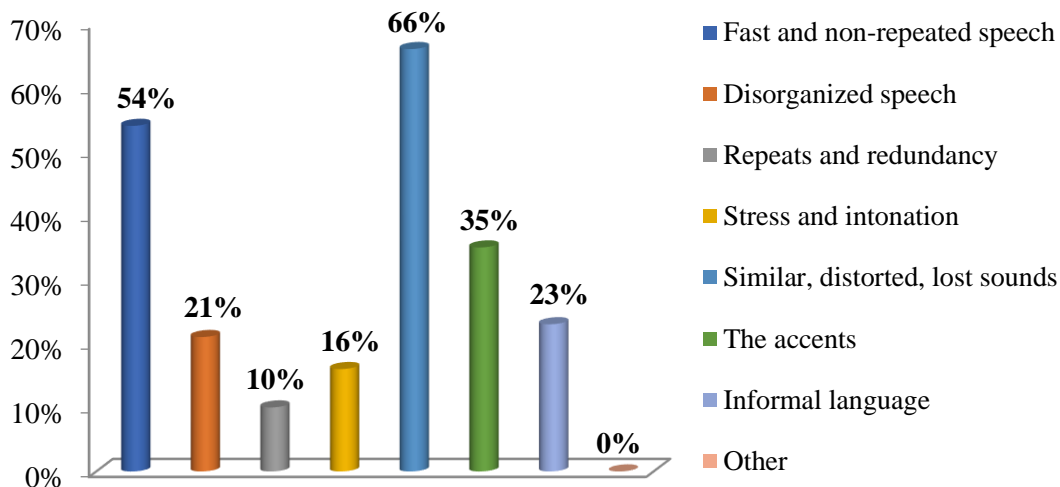


Figure 2. Problems concerning speaker factors

It can be seen from figure 2 that the problems most of the sophomores had to face were the similar, distorted, and lost sounds of spoken English and the fast and instant speech, followed by the accents and disorganized speech. As mentioned in the Literature Review, a number of the features of spoken English cause difficulty for foreign listeners, and the FFL sophomores were not an exception. A large number of students inevitably have problems with the features of spoken English. On the one hand, some features, such as the sounds and accents, require learners to practice in order to be familiar with them; on the other hand, some features would be advantages rather than problems if students recognize them and know how to make use of them.

*Listener factors*

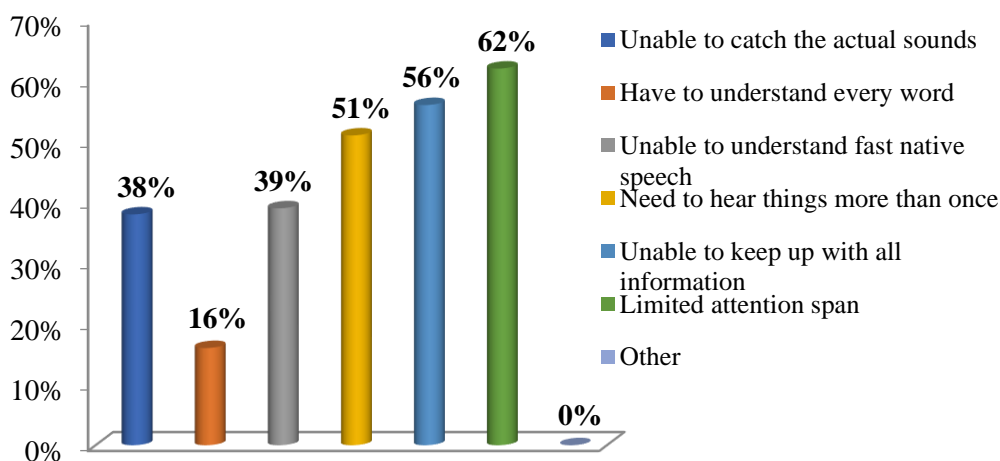


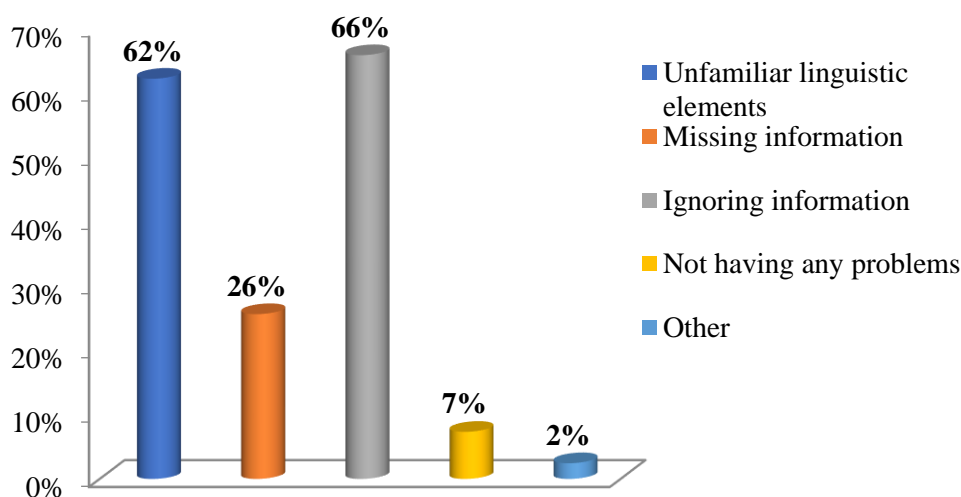
Figure 3. Problems concerning listener factors

According to Ur (1996, p.111-112), the six items above are common problems that learners have with listening to a foreign language. Thus, it was necessary to find out whether the sophomores encountered these problems.

Figure 3 illustrates that most of the students, which represented 62% (52 students), had problems with limited attention span since they would be unable to concentrate if the listening went on for a long time. This is a major problem in listening because the inability to concentrate prevents students from comprehending the speech. Underwood (1989, p.19) indicates that students will find concentration easier if the topic is interesting. This result inferred the need to provide more interesting listening topics as well as reduce the load of listening to suit the students' level.

The second problem that more than half of the sophomores (56%-47 students) often faced was that they found it difficult to keep up with all the information they were listening to. In other words, they felt overloaded with incoming information. In addition, about half of the students were unable to understand the message if they heard it only once. The next problems were the students' inability to understand fast natural native speech (39%- 33 students) and inability to catch the actual sounds of spoken English (38%-32 students). These students may lack phonological knowledge or knowledge of pronunciation. The reason is that if students mispronounce the sounds or words, they will be unlikely to recognize the actual sounds and words of native English speakers.

#### *Reasons concerning the bottom-up process*



*Figure 4. Reasons concerning bottom-up process*

Figure 4 shows that nearly 55 students (66%) had to ignore some parts because they could not keep up. Moreover, a large number of the students (52 students) were unfamiliar with the linguistic elements of English at 62%. If there is a lack of linguistic knowledge, bottom-up processing can be obstructed. In addition, those who often missed the upcoming parts because of not working out the meaning of one part quickly enough accounted for 26% (21 students). Six students (7%) believed that they did not have any problems with listening to linguistic elements of English. Two respondents (2%) had other ideas. One student indicated that the listening text had "too much information"; the other said that there were "new words and strange topics, especially science and technology". The result not only revealed that a high percentage of the sophomores failed to receive the upcoming input but also suggested providing listening materials that contain a less heavy load of information for the students to practice.

*Reasons concerning the top-down process*

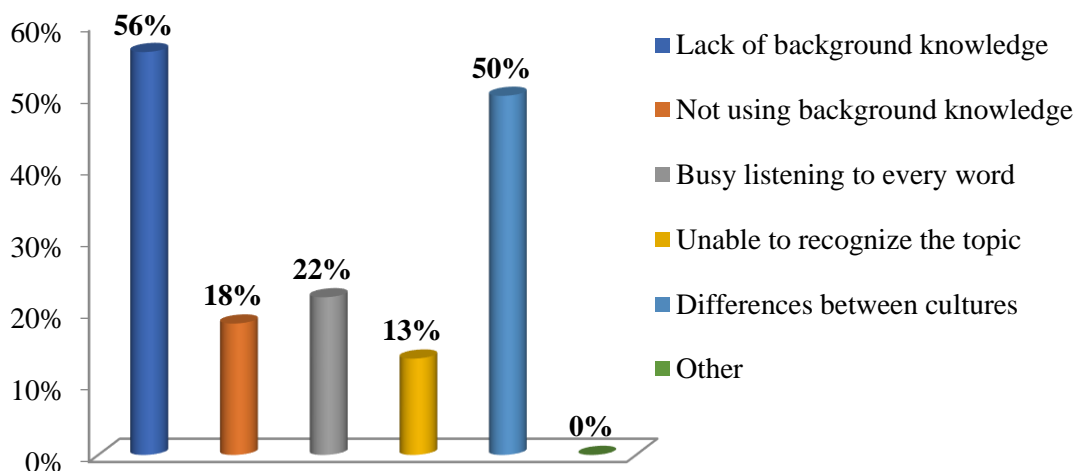


Figure 5. Reasons concerning top-down process

As can be seen from figure 5, two main reasons for difficulty in the top-down process were the lack of background knowledge of the target language and the different cultural backgrounds between the students and native speakers of English. One reason for problems in top-down processing that accounted for the greatest proportion of students was the lack of background knowledge. More than half of the students admitted to lacking the knowledge, at 56% (47 students). Another main reason that half of the sophomores chose was that the differences between the students’ culture and English culture made them misunderstand or even fail to understand spoken English. This information gap between speakers and listeners presents a serious obstacle to comprehension because language is used to express its culture (Anderson & Lynch, 1988). To overcome this problem, the students needed to improve their background knowledge of English, especially the cultural knowledge of the target language.

*Reasons concerning informal English*

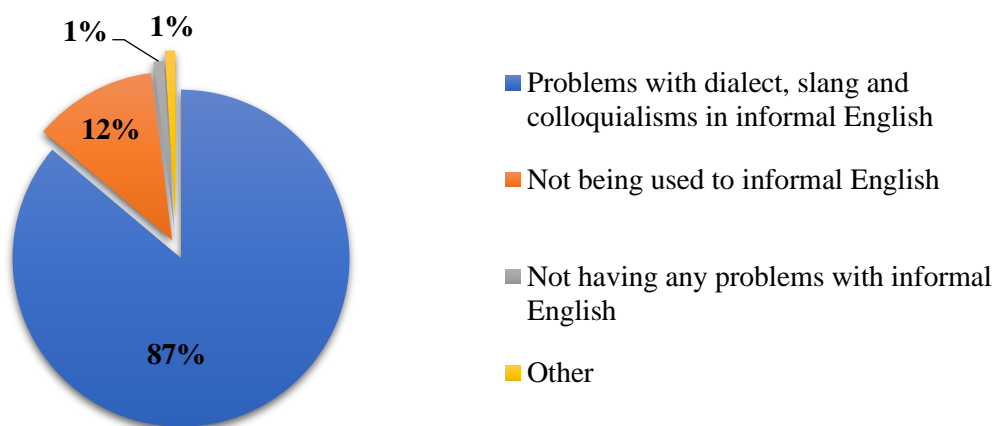


Figure 6. Reasons concerning informal English

Figure 6 shows that almost all of the respondents admitted to having difficulty understanding informal English. Only 1% (1 student) of the FFL sophomores assumed that they were fine with informal English. In spoken language, speakers often use informal language. Therefore, if students have limited experience with informal English, they will be likely to fail to understand the spoken language. The 37 FFL sophomores (87%) could not understand colloquialisms,

dialect, slang, and other non-standard features of informal English, plus a number of students (12%- 10 students) were not used to listening to the informal language, probably because they had never seen such words or syntax before. One student (1%) claimed, "sometimes I don't understand, but when I watch films, I can get it". That context can explain this, and other nonlinguistic clues such as facial expressions, gestures, and scenes in the movies may help this student to understand the language. It is inferred that the students should get more practice in listening to informal English, such as authentic conversations, English movies, etc.

### *Students' lack of communicative competence*

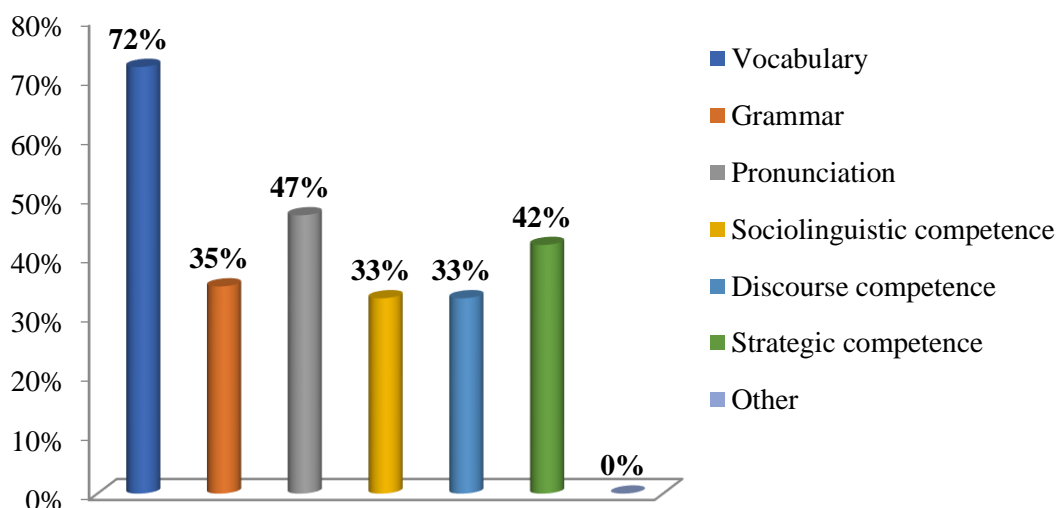


Figure 7. Students' lack of communicative competence

As is illustrated by figure 7, most of the sophomores lacked vocabulary, strategic competence, and sociolinguistic competence in listening to English.

Regarding *linguistic competence*, the number of FFL sophomores who admitted to lacking vocabulary accounted for the highest percentage, at 72% (60 students). In addition, nearly half of the students also lacked knowledge of pronunciation. If they mispronounce the sounds or words, they will fail to recognize the words in natural native speech. These students needed to improve not only their vocabulary and pronunciation but also the strategy of deducing the meaning of unfamiliar sounds and words from the context to compensate for their lack of knowledge. Furthermore, quite a high percentage of the sophomores (42%- 35 students) admitted to lacking listening strategies. As listeners "adjust their understanding of what they hear in the light of prior knowledge and incoming information" (Mendelsohn & Rubin, 1995), they must guess and predict during the listening process. Therefore, the students should improve the skill of guessing and predicting during their listening process to develop strategic listening competence.

**Research question 2:** Is mass media a solution to help EFL students enhance their listening skills?

The researcher and also the lecturer of the Advanced Language Studies 2 subject guided the students with the approach of focusing on vocabulary and pronunciation in spoken English. Before listening to a text, they were taught new vocabulary and how to pronounce them correctly. Also, features of spoken English such as stress, intonation, linking sounds, reduced

and swallowed sounds, and informal language were carefully explained by the instructor and practiced by the students.

In addition, after each session, the students were required to practice listening outside the classroom by themselves through mass media chosen by the lecturer. The means are accordingly listening to English movies, songs, audiobooks, and news. Then they reported specifically what they learned regarding English linguistic elements such as vocabulary, pronunciation and structures, informal language, and strategies such as guessing and predicting.

The results of their pretest and post-test scores are displayed in the following tables:

Concerning the students' level of listening ability, the descriptive statistics of students' pretest scores were calculated as follows.

Table 6. *Descriptive Statistics of Pretest scores*

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest	22				
Valid N (listwise)	22	31	89	54.82	14.978

As shown in Table 6, the mean of the pretest scores is 54.82%, correlated to the A2 level of CEFR, according to ETS, which is elementary in listening. This result is lower than expectations since the students were learning in their third year and were supposed to reach at least B1 or B2 level by the FFL. Moreover, it also revealed that these students had significant problems in listening to English.

Table 7. *Descriptive Statistics of Paired Samples Test*

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest - Posttest	-14.32	15.164	3.233	-21.041	-7.595	-4.43	21	.000

**Paired Samples Correlations**

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Pretest & Posttest	22	.529	.011

As shown in table 7, sig.< 0.05, which means there was a significant difference between the pretest and post-test scores. The result is also considered reliable since there is a significant correlation between the two tests (sig=0.011 <0.05). This leads to the consideration of how different the two tests are, as illustrated in the following table.

Table 8. *Descriptive Statistics of Paired Samples Statistics***Paired Samples Statistics**

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 Pretest	54.82	22	14.978	3.193
Posttest	69.14	22	16.181	3.450

As stated in table 8, the mean score of the post-test is higher than that of the pretest, indicating that the average student's listening skills score has increased. In particular, the post-test average score is 69.14, and 14.32 higher than the pretest. Therefore, it can be concluded that the effect of the lecturer's teaching method and the students' self-study by mass media on their listening performance is considered positive, although the empirical research on these students was only four weeks long.

**Discussion**

Factors that may affect the listening competence of learners is metacognitive studied by Brindley and Slatyer's (2002). They are: (a) the nature of input: speech rate, length of the passage, syntactic complexity, discourse, noise level, accent, amount of redundancy, etc. (b) the individual listener factors: memory, interest, background knowledge, motivation, etc. Moreover, Goh (2000) discussed "a Cognitive Perspective on Language Learners' Listening Comprehension Problems". This study also identified ten problems that occurred during the cognitive processing phases of utilization. Five problems were linked to word recognition and attention failure during perceptual processing, which is first, students cannot chunk streams of speech; therefore, they tend to neglect the next part as they are busy thinking about the meaning of the missing words. In addition, students appeared to concentrate too much on single words or simpler sentences. Students, then, were unable to form a mental representation of words that they had just listened to. Furthermore, students failed to understand subsequent parts of the input because of earlier problems. Besides, students committed to understanding the words but not the intended message. Last but not least, students had difficulties catching the key ideas when listening to a conversation. The finding of this study was that the major sources of listening comprehension problems experienced by most of the respondents were from listeners and listening material, related to the lack of appropriate listening strategies, such as making predictions of what the speakers talk about or recognizing the main points of the conversation.

Cross (2009) pointed out the importance of developing strategies involving bottom-up processes, whereas Macaro et al. (2007) stated "an unchallenged assumption that top-down processes are what teachers should be advocating in preference to bottom-up processes" (p.185). It can be seen that some experimental studies found a causal relationship between strategy instruction and proficiency improvement, and some had mixed results (Ozeki, 2000; Paulauskas, 1994; Thompson & Rubin, 1996). However, the evidence is not particularly convincing as the effects tended to be small (Macaro et al., 2007; Rubin et al., 2007). A few experimental studies, such as Kim and Kang (2016) and Qiu (2017), found that listening to English movies in class can enhance students' interest, confidence, and listening ability. However, this current study also found the pedagogical value in empirical evidence regarding the effect of using different kinds of mass media on English listening teaching and learning to improve students' listening ability.

Mass media clearly had a very crucial role in improving students' listening skills when applied during the teacher's instructions because of its diverse and authentic as nature. In line with the previous studies of Tafini (2009), John (2011), Ramani (2018) & Michell (2020), this study partly contributed to raising a vote for this very positive and potential effectiveness of mass media on enhancing students' listening skills.

## Conclusion

The findings of this research report some problems that FFL sophomores often encounter in listening comprehension. Generally, the FFL sophomores' listening ability was quite low. Regarding speaker factors, the most common problems that FFL sophomores encounter are distorted and indistinct sounds, fast and instant speech, and speakers' accents. Regarding listener factors, the most common problems that FFL sophomores encountered were their limited attention span, their inability to keep up with all information, and their inability to understand if listening only once.

The problems of BDU English major sophomores in listening comprehension were due to several reasons. The students did not know how to apply the knowledge to enhance the effectiveness of their listening comprehension. Thus, they were not familiar with numerous linguistic elements of spoken English. The students' lack of background knowledge of the English language and the differences between the social and cultural settings of their mother tongue and the target language also made them fail to understand the message. In addition, the shortage of practice in listening to informal speech led the students to the unfamiliarity of real conversations that contain lots of non-standard features. Lastly, sophomores' lack of necessary vocabulary, knowledge of pronunciation, socio-cultural background, and strategic competence resulted in difficulties in comprehending spoken English.

In the experimental research conducted in a specific classroom, the results analyzed from the pretest and post-test affirmed that mass media has a good contribution to improving students' listening skills. Teachers, with the use and support of mass media, were able to design varied listening practices that permitted students to experience and improve day by day.

To make listening sessions successful, teachers should provide students with the context of the listening text as well as elicit vocabulary and grammar before the listening in order to help students receive the incoming input more easily. Moreover, teachers should instruct students to listen selectively and develop listening skills by guessing and predicting. Providing authentic listening is a consideration when teaching listening with the hope that the students will gradually get used to natural speech and informal English. Through this, teachers should give students practice and make students aware of different accents of spoken English. It is advisable to select short, simple listening texts for lower-level students and more complicated authentic materials for advanced learners because low-level students would be discouraged by such failure, while advanced listeners may benefit from repeated or paraphrased messages.

Students, in general, and most of the FFL sophomores, in particular, could not understand the text when only listening once. As many students lack linguistic knowledge, especially vocabulary and pronunciation, and socio-cultural background knowledge of English necessary for listening comprehension, it is suggested that teachers help students improve such kinds of knowledge.

This study has several limitations involving the number of participants and the limited capacity of time and knowledge. Thus, future research should be conducted to develop this study's topic

and minimize its limitations. The first recommendation is to extend the number of participants in the research to increase its validity and reliability. The second suggestion for future research is that more research instruments, such as observation, should be carried out so that the results will be of greater value.

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## Biodata

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## Appendices

### QUESTIONNAIRE

#### I. The problems students have encountered in listening skills

- 1) Which of the following statements best describes your ability to understand spoken English?
  - a. I have great difficulty in understanding English, even when it is spoken very slowly.
  - b. I can understand simple words and sentences if they are spoken slowly and sometimes repeated.
  - c. I can understand the main ideas in most conversations, except when speech is fast.
  - d. I can understand most of the things spoken by a native speaker of English.
  - e. I can understand native English speakers, even when they are speaking quickly and using slang.
- 2) In your opinion, which of the following features of spoken English often cause you problems in listening comprehension? (you can choose more than 1 statement)
  - a. Spoken texts happen instantly and very fast.
  - b. Spoken texts contain a lot of *hesitations*, false starts, ungrammatical and incomplete forms, pauses and fillers such as *er, erm, and er, well, etc.*
  - c. Spoken texts contain a lot of repeats and *redundancy*
  - d. Many sounds are similar to each other and often changed or lost altogether in speech.
  - e. Speakers have strange accents.
  - f. Speakers tend to stress on key words and change intonation.
  - g. Speakers often use simple syntax and vocabulary.
  - h. Speakers tend to use informal language.
  - i. Other:.....
- 3) When there are unfamiliar sounds, words or phrases during the listening process you:
  - a. Ignore them
  - b. Worry and lose concentration on listening to the next parts.
  - c. Use the context to guess the meaning
  - d. Other:
- 4) How do you recognize important information of the speaker?
  - a. Keyword stress
  - b. Intonation change
  - c. Both of the above
  - d. I cannot recognize important information.
- 5) When speech is not well-organized (contains a lot of hesitations, false starts, self-corrections, repetitions, ungrammatical and incomplete forms, pauses and fillers), what do you do? (You can choose more than 1 statement)
  - a. Feel confused or even fail to understand the message
  - b. Make use of repetitions and redundancy to listen to the message again
  - c. Use signals and markers (such as *first, finally, so, and, but, etc.*) to recognize the links of speech
  - d. Other:.....
- 6) What problem(s) do you have when listening to informal English? You can choose more than 1 statement)
  - a. It is non-standard with a lot of dialect, slang, colloquialisms which I don't understand.
  - b. I'm not used to listening to informal English.
  - c. I don't have any problems with informal English.
  - d. Other:.....

- a. ....
- 7) What problem(s) do you think you have when listening to sounds, words and sentences to understand spoken English? (you can choose more than 1 statement)
- Many sounds, words and sentences are not familiar to me.
  - I'm so busy working out the meaning of one part that I miss the next part.
  - I have to ignore some parts because I cannot keep up.
  - I don't have difficulty in listening to them.
  - Other:.....
- 8) What problem(s) do you think you have in using background knowledge to listen to English? (you can choose more than 1 statement)
- I have little or no background knowledge of the topic I listen to.
  - I'm not used to relating background knowledge to the topic I listen to.
  - I cannot recognize which topic it is, so I cannot use any background knowledge.
  - Differences between my culture and English culture often make me misunderstand or even fail to understand the message.
  - Other:.....
- 9) What kinds of English knowledge necessary for listening comprehension do you think you lack? (you can choose more than 1 statement)
- Vocabulary
  - Grammar
  - Pronunciation
  - Socio-cultural background of English
  - How sentences are combined together
  - Listening strategies
  - Other:.....
- 10) Which of the following problems do you often face during the listening process? (you can choose more than 1 statement)
- I have trouble catching the actual sounds of the foreign language.
  - I have to understand every word; if I miss something, I feel I am failing and get worried and stressed.
  - I can understand people if they talk slowly and clearly; I can't understand fast, natural native-sounding speech.
  - I need to hear things more than once in order to understand.
  - I find it difficult to keep up with all the information I am getting.
  - If the listening goes on a long time, I get tired, and find it more and more difficult to concentrate.
  - Other:.....

## II. Solutions to improve students' listening skills

- 11) Which of the following strategies do you actually use during the listening process? (you can choose more than 1 statement)
- Paying attention to every word
  - Identifying relevant points; rejecting irrelevant information
  - Retaining relevant points by note-taking, summarizing
  - Making inferences by paying attention to speakers' attitude or intention
- 12) When listening to English, in order to understand the meaning, you:

- b. Listen to sounds, words, clauses and sentences of the text; link them together to form meanings
- c. Use context and your own background knowledge of the topic to guess and predict what speakers are going to say
- d. Do both of the above.

**Movie report**

Movie’s name:.....

Movie summary:  
 .....  
 .....

Who is your favorite character? Why?  
 .....  
 .....

What is your favorite scene? Why?  
 .....  
 .....

What did you learn from the movie?

New words/phrases and their English definitions	New sentences/idioms	Linking sounds	Reduced forms of sounds (underline the reduced sounds)
e.g. stunning: extremely attractive or impressive make up for: to do something to correct a bad situation	e.g. Hang in there! Time flies when you’re having fun.	e.g. get _up What’s _that?	e.g. <u>student</u> , <u>mountain</u> What <u>did</u> you do?

**Song report**

3 songs' names: .....

What are the main ideas of each song? .....

.....  
.....

What are your favorite statements of the songs? Why?

.....  
.....  
.....

What did you learn from the songs?

New words/phrases and their English definitions	New sentences/idioms	Linking sounds	Reduced forms of sounds (underline the reduced sounds)

**Game show report**

3 game shows' names:.....

What is the main content of each game show?

.....  
.....  
.....

What is your favorite game show? Why? .....

.....  
.....

What did you learn from the game shows?

New words/phrases and their English definitions	New sentences/idioms	Linking sounds	Reduced forms of sounds (underline the reduced sounds)

**VOA Special English news report**

3 pieces of VOA Special English News:.....

What is the main content of each piece of news?

.....  
 .....

What is your favorite news? Why? .....

.....  
 .....

What did you learn from the news?

New words/phrases and their English definitions	New sentences/idioms	Linking sounds	Reduced forms of sounds (underline the reduced sounds)

**Story report**

3 stories' names:.....

What is the main content of each story?

.....  
 .....

What is your favorite character of each story? Why?

.....  
 .....

What is your favorite story? Why? .....

.....  
 .....

What did you learn from the stories?

New words/phrases and their English definitions	New sentences/idioms	Linking sounds	Reduced forms of sounds (underline the reduced sounds)