

DECLARATION

I, Tran Ngoc Phuong Uyen, pledge this topic: “**Problems and strategies for SIU students to do TOEIC listening test**” is an independent research project without duplication of others. The subject is a product that I have tried to study in the process of studying at the school. During the writing process, I consulted some documents of clear origin, under the guidance of Ms. Nguyen Thi Bich Thuy – M.A. of TESOL and Literary Studies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Most importantly, none of this could have happened without my family. My mother offered her encouragement over the phone every time I was ready to quit. This thesis stands as a testament to her unconditional love and encouragement.

INSTRUCTOR'S COMMENTS

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ABSTRACT

The current study focuses on the mental processes SIU students – major and nonmajor – activate in listening comprehension, and the strategies they use in different phases of comprehension. Those are the problems they usually encounter while listening to the TOEIC test. Data is gathered by means of questionnaires. The results of the study show that accent, pronunciation, speed of speech, insufficient vocabulary, different accent of speakers, lack of concentration, anxiety, and bad quality of recording were the major listening comprehension problems encountered by SIU learners. Suggestions are then for addressing the problems regarding how teachers can help their students overcome listening comprehension problems. The results of this study may also be useful for those who are interested in this field.

Keywords: listening, listening skill, listening comprehension, listening problems, listening strategies of TOEIC test, TOEIC, TOEIC listening.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- TOEIC: Test of English for International Communication
- ETS: Educational Testing Service
- EFL: English as a Foreign Language
- SIU: The Saigon International University

Chapter 1

THEORETICAL BASIS

1.1. Rationale

English is one of the most important languages in social development today. More people around the world than ever before are studying and learning English because it has become the international language of education and business. Today, many companies make a point of TOEIC in the case of recruitment and promotion. TOEIC means The Test of English for International Communication. The TOEIC test was first introduced by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) in the late 1970s. The company created the test to evaluate English-language proficiency within a business environment. The idea was developed by Yasuo Kitaoka. The first TOEIC test was developed in 1977; students had begun to complete the TOEIC test papers by 1979. This test is designed specifically to measure the everyday English skills of people working in an international environment and a prerequisite to improve the quality of professional life and work environment.

The Saigon International University uses TOEIC as a measure for major and non-major students. TOEIC is not only designed to measure the everyday English skills of worker but also used to be graduation requirements and recognition for students of Vietnamese program at SIU. They must hold a TOEIC certificate - ETS, USA with a minimum score of 500 (both bachelor and diploma level).

TOEIC is divided into two main sections: Listening and Reading. In the listening category there are four sections; the reading category is slightly shorter with three sections. While students pass the Reading section easily and get a high score, most of them fail in the Listening section. Because both the questions and possible responses for Parts One and Two

are only heard, not printed. In Parts Three and Four, the questions will be either printed or spoken, so it is a little easier but it is hard in vocabularies and idioms in context. So that this study focuses on the Listening section of TOEIC test.

1.2. Aim of the research

This study attempts to explore a broad view and knowledge about the understanding of how SIU students in listening difficulties. This thesis aims at:

1. Finding out comments listening comprehension problems encountered by English students at the Saigon International University; and
2. Providing some suggestions to help the students overcome these listening comprehension problems.

1.3. Scope and limitation of the study

The scope of the study focuses on sixty students who are from junior to senior year and graduated students at SIU.

The study limits on problems and strategies to do TOEIC Listening test.

1.4. Research Questions

The current study tries to find answers to the following questions:

1. In fact, what cause affect the students listening comprehension?
2. What listening problems do SIU students face when doing the listening section of TOEIC test?
3. How can the students overcome these listening problems?

1.5. Structure of the study

The structure of this study includes in four chapters:

Chapter 1: Theoretical Basis

This chapter indicated the rationale for choose this topic, pointing out the aim, the scope and limitation as well as the methods of the study, and the research questions. This study focused on problems of listening comprehension in TOEIC test and language knowledge about social English to serve effectively for giving suggestions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, it catalogued the terminations of listening and description of TOEIC test, and summaried researches relating to the topic of this study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter described the method of this study found on two method including qualitative and quantitative method. The survey was executed by an questionnaire and an interview. The data was collected and analysed from the questions of this survey.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

The specification of results showed information about the problem when doing listening section in TOEIC test. From the problems, the suggestions for strategies listening were showed to help SIU students improve their listening skill to do TOEIC listening test.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendation

This final chapter summarized the development of the study, and gave a brief re-statement of the findings and the implications for practical solutions.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Definitions of Terms

2.1.1. Listening

According to Thomlison's (1984), listening is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. This process involves understanding a speaker's accent or pronunciation, the speaker's grammar and vocabulary, and comprehension of meaning. An able listener is capable of doing these four things simultaneously.

Listening consists of auditory discrimination, aural grammar, choosing necessary information, remembering it, and connecting it to the process between sound and form of meaning (Morley, 1971 as cited in Pourhosein Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). Rost (1994) told that listening is an active mental ability. It helps us to understand the world around us and is one of the necessary parts in making successful communication (as cited in Pourhosein Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). Pourhossein Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) stated that listening includes listening for thoughts, feelings, and intentions and this needs active involvement, effort, and practice.

2.1.2. Listening Comprehension

There are a lot of different meanings of the term "listening comprehension". Listening comprehension refers to the understanding of what the listener has heard and it is his/her ability to repeat the text despite the fact that the listener may repeat the sounds without real comprehension (Hamouda, 2013).

For Rost (2005, p. 503), listening comprehension encompasses receptive, constructive, and interpretive aspects of cognition. Therefore, listening comprehension is "a complex cognitive process that allows a person to understand spoken language".

Bentley & Bacon (1996) state that listening, an important part of the second language learning process has also been defined as an active process during which the listener constructs meaning from oral input.

2.1.3. Types of Listening Skills

Listening is an active, purposeful processing of making sense of what people hear. Listening is the first of the four language skills, which are: listening, speaking, reading, writing. In English language, listening is usually the first language skill that we learn. It is usually divided into four types:

Types of Listening Skills			
Critical Listening	Empathic Listening	Active Listening	Listening for Enjoyment

Table 1: Four types of Listening Skills

2.1.3.1. Critical Listening

It means a listener takes into consideration the possible motives of the speaker and the context, as well as the words such as the customer listen to the salesman talking about the product.

2.1.3.2. Empathic Listening

It is focused on the needs of the speaker. The purpose of empathic listening is to allow another person to release emotions.

2.1.3.3. Active Listening

Both empathic and critical listening skills are used during active listening, and even silence is an important part of active listening. By withholding judgments, solutions or advice, the active listener sometimes simply waits and uses non-verbal language to let the speaker know that he is paying attention.

2.1.3.4. Listening for Enjoyment

Listening for enjoyment involves attending to sounds for pleasure such as listening to music, sports broadcasts, comedians or poetry readings.

2.1.4. Problems of listening

According to Alex Case (2019 - Why your students have problems with listening comprehension), there are eleven problems of listening:

1. The listeners are trying to understand every word.
2. They get left behind trying to work out what a previous word meant.
3. They just do not know the most important words.
4. They do not recognise the words that they know.
5. They have problems with different accents.
6. They lack listening stamina/ they get tired.
7. They have a mental block.
8. They are distracted by background noise.
9. They cannot cope with not having images.
10. They have hearing problems.
11. They cannot tell the difference between the different voices.

2.1.5. Listening Strategies in TOEIC test

(According to masterthetoeic.com)

2.1.5.1. Photographs Strategies

According to masterthetoeic.com, there are two strategies for Photographs part, including Pictures with No People and Avoiding Extreme Inferences. The Photographs focuses on people, things, actions or locations. The listeners must select the one Statement which best describes what they see in the picture.

Pictures with No People	
a. The physical relationship between things you see	b. The physical condition of a thing you see
The listeners have to listen for prepositions that accurately describe the relationship between different things in the Photograph.	The listeners have to listen for Adjectives that accurately describe the condition of things in the Photograph.
Avoiding Extreme Inferences	
An inference is a conclusion that you can make, using clues seen in the picture but the TOEIC test often tricks into picking a wrong answer because it could be true. Here are some suggestions for doing Listening TOEIC test:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Correct answers will rarely talk about what happened in the past. - Correct answers will not predict what will happen in the future. - The correct answer will describe what can clearly be seen in the picture 	

Table 2: Photographs Strategies

2.1.5.2. Question – Response Strategies

a. Word Repetition	b. Answering Questions with “Yes” or “No”
People in English do not normally repeat keywords in their response to a question. When hearing an answer choice that repeats a keyword from the Question, it is	Some questions that begin with “when”, the listeners can answer with a “yes” or “no”. Sometimes the listeners will not hear “yes” or “no”—instead, they might hear a

<p>going to be a wrong answer. And the only time that normally hear a key word repeated in a Response on the TOEIC is when the Response is asking for more information about a key word.</p>	<p>response that explains why the speaker cannot give a “yes” or “no” response. Also, they do not need to hear “yes” or “no” in a response to a Yes/No Question.</p>
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Table 3: Question – Respons Strategies

2.1.5.3. Conversation Strategies

a. Wrong Speaker, Wrong Action	b. Similar-Sounding Words
<p>When answering Questions, pay close attention to who the Question is asking about—is the Question about the male speaker, the female speaker, or a different person who is the topic of the Conversation?</p> <p>Some wrong answer choices will try to trick by giving information that is about a different person.</p>	<p>Another common trick used on the TOEIC is for a wrong answer choice to use a word that sounds similar to a word that heard in the conversation. The listeners can use the context of the conversation to help them decide which is more likely the correct Answer Choice.</p>

Table 4: Conversation Strategies

2.1.5.4. Short Talk Strategies

Similar Information	Incorrect Paraphrase
Before the Talk begins, look at the Questions and see if the Answer Choices contain words that look or sound similar to each other.	Wrong answer will often use words and ideas from the talk but change them slightly, making them incorrect.

Table 5: Short Talk Strategies

2.2. Description of TOEIC test

2.2.1. What is TOEIC test?

TOEIC stands for Test of English for International Communication. The TOEIC test is an English language proficiency test for people working in international business or planning to use English to communicate with other. The purpose of the TOEIC is an objective measure of worker's abilities about communication skills, listening and reading comprehension. It is divided into two main sections: Listening and Reading. There are 100 questions in each section. Separate scaled scores are provided for each section, the part score scales ranging from five to 495 and the total score scales ranging from 10 to 990.

2.2.2. TOEIC Format:

Section 1: Listening (45 minutes - 100 questions)	Section 2: Reading (75 minutes - 100 questions)
Part 1: Photographs Part 2: Question – Response Part 3: Conversation Part 4: Short Talks	Part 5: Incomplete Sentences Part 6: Error Recognition or Text Completion Part 7: Reading Comprehension

Table 6: Format of TOEIC

2.2.3. Content of TOEIC Listening Section

This is the latest format of the TOEIC test for TOEIC listening and reading in Vietnam announced by IIG. The listening section makes the test-taker use skills as vocabulary in context, idioms in context and grammar to the test. The test administration includes an audio CD and a booklet and the answers are recorded with paper and pencil provided by IIG.

Part 1 Photographs 6 questions	Four short statements regarding a photograph will be spoken only one time. The testers must choose the one that best describes the photograph and mark their answer on the answer sheet.
Part 2 Question – Response 25 questions	Three responses to one question or statement will be spoken only one time. The testers must choose the best response for the question and mark their answer on the answer sheet.
Part 3 Conversation 39 questions	Conversations between two or three people will be spoken only one time. The testers listen to each conversation and read the question in the test book, mark the best answer. There are three questions for each conversation.

Part 4 Short Talks 30 questions	Short talk such as announcements or narrations will be spoken only one time. The testers listen to each conversation and read the question in the test book, mark the best answer. There are three questions for each talk.
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Table 7: Content of TOEIC Listening Section

2.3. Review of previous works

Since TOEIC was applied in Vietnam and especially in universities, there were many researches to measure listening and reading English skills of students. This part summarized the research studies related to research issues.

2.3.1. Factors Affecting Listening Comprehension and Strategies for Improvement: A Case Study - Naci Yildiz and Mustafa Alba. (2015)

This study also showed how important listening skills do in learning and teaching foreign languages. They pointed out that the difficulty of listening texts must be at learners' level of understanding and listening texts must absorb attention of learners. To overcome these problems, they gave some solutions about the interesting topic, the speed of speech, and the silent and motivating listening environment.

2.3.2. A Correlation Study between EFL Strategic Listening and Listening Comprehension Skills among Secondary School Students - Dr. Iman Abdul-Reheem Amin, Dr. Mahsoub Abdul-Sadeq ALy and Dr. Magdy Mohammad Amin. (2011)

This research showed about the relationship between students' strategic listening and their listening comprehension. Besides, they said that students who knew how, when and why