

# Use of Audiobooks to Improve Listening Comprehension for English Majors at Thai Nguyen University of Education

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**Abstract-** Listening is one of the five inborn senses of human beings and it is a normal and frequent skill in our daily life. Nevertheless, numerous English majors at academic institutions in Vietnam face problems in listening comprehension. Therefore, the goal of this study is to find solutions to improve English listening comprehension for English majors through the use of audiobooks. The main objectives are to build up a procedure for employing ready-made audiobooks, to evaluate the influence of audiobooks on English majors' listening comprehension, and to collect feedback from students regarding the benefits and drawbacks of audiobooks as well as possible solutions to promote the use of audiobooks. The quasi-experimental research design was used with two surveys (before and after the experiment). Twenty first-year English majors volunteered to take part in the research with half of them placed in the experimental group (audiobook group) and the rest were put into the control group (non-audiobook group). All of the twenty participants were required to respond to a pre-questionnaire and take a listening pre-test and post-test while only the experimental group answered the feedback questionnaire. The research results reveal that utilizing audiobooks can result in significant improvements in listening comprehension among English majors. In addition, feedback from the learners was quite positive. Finally, the research has made some suggestions for minimizing the shortcomings of using audiobooks and enhance the potential of this method in improving listening comprehension for English majors.

**Index Terms-** listening, listening comprehension, audiobook, English major

## I. INTRODUCTION

The ultimate goal of any foreign language education is to enable learners to understand and use the target language effectively. Therefore, reading, listening, writing, and speaking are very important in EFL classrooms. However, the ability to acquire and effective work skills are two necessary and sufficient conditions for learners to have comprehensive access to the language. Indeed, receptive skills are a prerequisite for successful production skills, as Brown (2004) once emphasized as follows: "How can you speak a language without listening?". Hence, determining an effective listening method or methods for acquiring this skill has been considered as one of the essential problems of foreign language teaching.

Listening is an indispensable skill that enables us to receive, understand and evaluate the information being communicated. Listening is around each of us from the very first day of our lives and it is also an essential skill that is first acquired by language learners. Also, understanding and overcoming the barriers to listening is essential in facilitating highly effective communication skills. It is a highly integrative skill because it is generally the first skill that learners develop (Oxford, 1993; Vandergrift, 1999). Many people do not realize that listening is not merely the act of hearing a sound but also receiving the contents of the speaker's message. As a result, they simply listen without trying to absorb and understand what is being said. Listening is not a natural gift, but it is not difficult for us to try to improve it. Once people listen less effectively and do not fully understand what they communicate as well as receive will become incomplete. However, if enough effort is put into improving it, listening will eventually become effective.

After looking into the situation of listening classes at Thai Nguyen University of Education (TNUE), the researchers found out that most of the time in class, students are given listening tasks based on their level. However, their results as well as their performances have not really been as effective as they wanted. A weakness in listening comprehension of TNUE students is revealed in that they cannot understand all information from sources such as English news, English movies, or English songs. Furthermore, they only remember some information from the listening material and miss the rest; they also find it difficult to accurately express the information they have heard in written or verbal form.

Audiobooks have recently been regarded as a useful literacy tool and resources in the foreign language learning process because they might help construct language skills among learners (Serafini, 2004). Audiobooks were first introduced in 1931 in the "Books for the Blind Adult" range. Not only that, the use of audiobooks has gone beyond its original purpose to become a tool to improve children's reading comprehension or struggling readers (Harris, 2001; Stone-Harris, 2008).

Audiobooks can easily help listeners to follow spoken and written forms (Chang & Read, 2006). In addition, Sternberg (2003) has shown that the human mind processes visual and visual information through distinct channels. Similarly, Paivio's (1971) double coding theory has emphasized the effectiveness of combining speech and visual images in cognition. For example, Saricoban and Yuruk (2016) found that visual context improves the reading comprehension skills of EFL learners. Therefore, audiobooks provide text and sound simultaneously, which the principles of double coding theory are strictly adhered to.

However, very little research has been done on the impact of audiobooks on the listening skills of EFL learners. This concept of learning is also rarely utilized in Vietnam, especially in Thai Nguyen University of Education. Therefore, we decided to do a specific study on the practical impacts of using audiobooks on English learners - specifically English majors - Thai Nguyen University of Pedagogy.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Key concepts

#### *Listening comprehension*

Listening comprehension is not only an essential part of listening skills but is also a door to help readers master and acquire a foreign language. Liu (2008) pointed out that it is not easy to formulate a specific definition of listening comprehension because each term has been defined variously by different researchers. According to Vandergrift (1999), listening comprehension is a complex interactive process that requires listeners to pay attention to all factors such as sounds, intonation, linguistic structure, and social structural context. In the like manner, Holden (2004) also argues that listening comprehension is a complex activity with mental effort to ensure understanding and listeners must listen passively to produce what they have understood. On the contrary, Jinhong (2011) countered with the argument that listening comprehension is not only “a process-oriented activity in which the listener needs to actively process the input step by step” but also “a process-oriented activity”, a creative act that causes listeners to construct or assign meaning based on given information or their background experience and knowledge”. From the above-mentioned definitions, listening comprehension has multiple processes of comprehension in language when it is understood, interpreted, and spoken. This communication skill is connected to cognitive learning as it works with the development of memory, attention, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension monitoring.

However, several experts and researchers gave out somewhat similar opinions yet with different points. For instance, Young-Suk Kim from the University of California, Irvine claimed in her science project that listening comprehension is the ability to listen and comprehend spoken language of different oral texts. Also, she argued that many language and cognitive skills contribute to listening comprehension, including working memory, attention, vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, inferencing, theory of mind, and comprehension monitoring. Meanwhile, another definition from Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) saying that listening comprehension is theoretically viewed as a dynamic process where people focus on chosen parts of aural input, structure meaning of the passage, and connect to what they hear with established knowledge. Furthermore, Richard and Schmid (2002) indicate that listening comprehension refers to the way of understanding speech in a native or foreign language. As a result, based on the definitions above, we conclude listening comprehension as a process of totally understanding the language and defining the language meaning being uttered by the speakers. In addition, we concluded that listening comprehension consists of 3 main characteristics. First of all, it is an active activity, for it is to gain information. Secondly, it is a creative practice since the audiences or the students in this research, build the definition and give the information based on their background knowledge. Lastly, listening comprehension is a communicative practice in which the two speakers and audience are included. During the process, the speakers and audiences share the information as well as completely listen to what the speakers say, then answer the statement that will be conveyed by the listener.

#### *Audiobooks*

According to Serini (2004), effective tools to help children read are very important, and an important tool is audiobooks. Chen (2004) believed that audiobooks not only bridge the gap between listening vocabulary and also improve reading vocabulary. When children listen to audiobooks and read along with text, they are not only exposed to new vocabulary but also begin to make connections between physical forms of words that exist only in their listening vocabulary. Audiobooks allow readers to enjoy literature at their individual listening comprehension level, which is significantly higher than their reading level (Clark, 2007). As such, the audiobook can be used as a remedial medium as it allows children to also hear the text as they follow along with the printed version (Casbergue and Harris, 1996). Audiobooks are the perfect reading material. With audiobooks, children can completely practice reading without the help of teachers or parents (Chen, 2004). In particular, students can use audiobooks to easily read difficult materials independently (Bomar, 2006).

According to Mark Haris from the University of Wolverhampton, audiobooks are usually known as “talking books” or voice recordings of the text of a book that you listen to rather than read. They can be spotted as exact word-for-word versions of books or abridged versions. You can listen to audiobooks on any tablet such as smartphones, laptops, computers, or even in-car entertainment systems. Audiobooks can usually be found or purchased in online bookstores, most audiobooks nowadays are free on the internet and can be downloaded at any time. Meanwhile, Ekaterina V. Talalakina from the National Research University Higher School of Economics said that audiobooks are viewed as derivatives from their printed versions and thus used in education as a supplement to reading aimed at increasing literacy. In addition, an author from Fiver claims an audiobook allows a person to listen to a recording of the text of the book, rather than read the text of the book. In the end, after some consideration and the given explanations above, we agreed that an audiobook

is an audio version of a reading material, usually articles or books, which helps users in listening rather than the usual reading habit. Also, these types of products can be found online for free or purchased legally in online book stores.

## 2.2 Previous research

In the past, there have been numerous studies on the improvement of listening comprehension, some of which have created impacts and enhancements in the research of boosting this ability. For instance, a study of using digital stories to improve listening comprehension with Spanish young learners of English where researchers examine the effects that digital stories may have on the understanding of spoken English through the perspective of 6-year-old Spanish students. To acquire these targets, the researcher applied a quasi-experimental into her research in 6 state school in Madrid. Also, a pre and post-test was applied to evaluate whether internet-based technology could improve listening comprehension in English as a foreign language (henceforth, EFL). The outcomes illustrate that the experimental group outperformed the control group in the final test administered. These results raised interesting issues relating to the use of technology in the context of foreign language learning.

A study on "Insights into Listening Comprehension Problems: A Case Study in Vietnam" conducted by Thao Quoc Tran at Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology (HUTECH) and Tham My Duong Faculty of Foreign Languages and Pedagogy, Nong Lam University. This study was conducted to determine the problem of English listening comprehension of Vietnamese high school students according to the perception of students and their teachers. The study was conducted with the participation of 368 grade 11 students who responded to the questionnaire and 8 EFL teachers who participated in a semi-structured interview at a high school in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. In particular, quantitative and qualitative data of the collected studies were analyzed using descriptive statistics (i.e. frequency/percentage) and content analysis, respectively. Both students and teachers pointed out typical cognitive problems in English listening comprehension. In addition, the students encountered phonetic and vocabulary problems (i.e. high speaking speed and vocabulary difficulty), semantic and syntactic problems (i.e., long speech), and problems of expression (i.e., implication, unfamiliar subject matter, and organization of ideas). Finally, results are discussed on the EFL context in Vietnam and some pedagogical implications are presented

Another bright example is the study in the use of songs in improving listening comprehension in English where the researcher studies the use and selection of songs in listening comprehension classes. Nine songs in different genres were given out to 3 elementary-level students, the students were then asked to fill in the blanks in the lyrics provided in three listening cycles. The best-comprehended songs were in the acoustic soft rock and soft rock genres. The given results suggested that the clarity of pronunciation and the low density of instrumentation are key factors in increasing listening comprehension. Meanwhile, the origin of the singer does not seem to affect the comprehension process. Nevertheless, it is believed that analysis of songs in more varied genres may contribute to the field. Furthermore, Hussein Elkhaifi from the University of Washington, Seattle, Washington demonstrated his work with audiobooks in The effect of pre-listening activities on listening comprehension in Arabic learners. Generally, the study evaluated the effect of pre-listening activities and repeated listening exposure on listening comprehension scores of Arabic students, which succeed beautifully and showed that while certain pre-listening activities have positive impacts on student's marks on listening comprehension tests, repeated exposure to the passage is a better predictor of improved performance. Moreover, there are multiple types of research conducted in the past on proving that using audiobooks in classes not only improves listening comprehension but also reading and writing skills. For instance, Using audiobooks to Improve Reading and Academic Performance by Joel R. Montgomery, EdD. This research highlights significant research about what below grade-level reading means in middle school classrooms and suggests a tested approach to improve reading comprehension levels significantly by using audiobooks. The use of these audiobooks can improve reading and academic performance for both English language learners (ELLs) and native English speakers (NES). But as the investigation goes on, the number of students who lose enthusiasm for learning reading increased. Chen, Shu-Hsien L. says that audiobooks can have a significant impact on children's reading habits and interests.

There are many studies that were conducted to investigate the effectiveness of audiobooks when applying them in the way of learning English. For example, The Effects of Audiobooks on EFL Students' Listening Comprehension by Galip Kartal, which investigates the effects of audiobooks on the listening comprehension skills of EFL Students, and their attitudes towards the process of using audiobooks in a foreign language classroom. The participants were 66 first-year students of a state university in Turkey. The researcher followed a pre- post-test control group research design using quantitative and qualitative research methods. The analysis of the survey data showed that audiobooks had contributed greatly to participants' listening comprehension, pronunciation, and motivation.

Similarly, the project "Using Audiobooks for Developing Listening Comprehension among Saudi EFL Preparatory Year Students" by Manal Mohamed Khodary Mohamed in Ismailia Faculty of Education, Suez Canal University, Egypt. Her research investigated the usefulness of audiobooks on developing listening comprehension among Saudi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) preparatory year students. The results showed a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group on, which also revealed that a statistically significant difference was found in the mean marks of the experimental group between the pre and post LCT in favor of the post LCT. Therefore, it can be concluded that the audiobooks helped the experimental group develop listening comprehension as they exceeded the control group on the posttest and they achieved a better result on the post test than the pre test. However, some of the feedback showed that the establishment of both given studies was boring and time-consuming.

Furthermore, there are multiple types of research conducted in the past on proving that using audiobooks in classes not only improves listening comprehension but also reading and writing skills. For instance, Using audiobooks to Improve Reading and Academic Performance by Joel R. Montgomery, EdD. This article highlights significant research about what below grade-level reading means in middle school classrooms and suggests a tested approach to improve reading comprehension levels significantly by using audiobooks. The use of these audiobooks can improve reading and academic performance for both English language learners (ELLs) and native English speakers (NES). But as the investigation goes on, the number of students who lose enthusiasm for learning reading increased.

To sum up, there is plenty of research related to how beneficial audiobooks are when we use them in English classes or what are the advantages of using audiobooks in teaching English and the results are universal: audiobooks can help students enhance listening comprehension for learners. Therefore, we decided to conduct this research in the context of Thai Nguyen University of Education to build an optimal technique to improve listening comprehension through the use of audiobooks, which is very suitable for our current situation, and then evaluate its impact on the student's listening comprehension.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Research design

The study utilized the quasi-experimental research design, which employed the pre-test, post-test and nonequivalent groups to evaluate the impacts of audiobooks on English majors' listening comprehension. In addition, surveys were conducted to collect students' feedback regarding the benefits and drawbacks of audiobooks and possible solutions to enhance the effectiveness of audiobooks.

#### 3.2. Participants

The present study was conducted at the Thai Nguyen University of Education in Vietnam. 20 first-year English majors at Thai Nguyen University of Education (TNUE) were the participants of the study. 10 of them were assigned to the experimental group (audiobook group) while the other 10 were put into the control group (non-audiobook group).

All of these 20 students were required to answer a series of questions before the experiment about their perceptions, awareness, experience, attitudes and levels related to listening comprehension. After that they were required to take a listening pre-test and post-test while only the experimental group answered a feedback questionnaire relating the use of audiobooks in listening.

These students have taken basic language development courses such as lexicology, contextual grammar, reading, listening, speaking, and writing in the first year of their academic life. Currently, they are doing intensive listening, speaking, reading, and writing courses at the university in their second year. The age of the participants varies from 19 to 21.

#### 3.3. Data collection instruments and procedure

##### *Pre-questionnaire*

Before the experiment occurred, the researchers created an online questionnaire to gather the learners' their perceptions, awareness, experience, attitudes and levels related to listening comprehension audiobooks.

##### *Pre-test*

Prior to the experiment, the participants (both experimental and control groups) were given an English Listening Test as a pre-test. The pre-test was designed based on Parts 1 and 2 of the IELTS listening test.

##### *Post-test*

At the end of the experiment, another English Listening test was given to the students as the post-test. The post-test was designed based on the format of Parts 1 and 2 of the IELTS listening test.

A pre-posttest design requires the researcher to collect data about the students' level of listening comprehension before the intervention takes place, and then to collect the same data after the intervention takes place. In this study, the pre-posttest design allows the researchers to make inferences on the impact of audiobooks on students' listening comprehension by comparing the differences between the pre-test and post-test results.

##### *Student feedback questionnaire*

The questionnaire was designed to gather the participants' feedback relating to audiobooks, including such aspects as procedure/steps, benefits, disadvantages, attitudes of participants, and possible solutions to enhance the effectiveness of using audiobooks in listening courses. The questionnaire was designed in a mixed format, including 3-point statements, close-ended questions and open-ended questions.

##### *Utilizing audiobooks process*

**Table 1. Procedure of utilizing audiobooks to improve listening comprehension**

Lessons	Audiobook sections	Supplementary exercises	Expected Outcomes
Week 1	Audiobook: The call of the wild Chapter 1: Into the primitive Chapter 2: The claw of club and fang Chapter 3: The dominant primordial beast Total time: 60 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ True or false exercises</li> <li>○ Matching exercises</li> <li>○ Short answer exercises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The participants can listen for specific information and do true or false, matching, and short answer exercises.</li> <li>- At this stage, we aimed to let the experimental group get to know with the new technique, or audiobooks.</li> </ul>
Week 2	Audiobook: The call of the wild Chapter 4: Who Has Won to Mastership Chapter 5: The Toil of Trace and Trail Total time: 45 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Multiple choice exercises</li> <li>○ Gap-filling exercises</li> <li>○ True or false exercises</li> <li>○ Matching exercises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The participants can listen for specific information and do true or false, matching, multiple choices, and gap-filling exercises.</li> <li>- By this time, we prepared some more exercises related to IELTS listening tests. In addition, we reduced the proportion of time for listening by slightly.</li> </ul>
Week 3	Audiobook: The call of the wild Chapter 6: For the Love of a Man Chapter 7: The Sounding of the Call Total time: 50 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Matching exercises</li> <li>○ Short answer exercises</li> <li>○ Multiple choice exercises</li> <li>○ Gap-filling exercises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The participants can listen for specific information and do multiple choice, gap-filling, matching, and short answer exercises.</li> <li>- At week 3, we repeated the same project as week 2.</li> </ul>
Week 4	Audiobook: Animal Farm Chapter 1 Chapter 2 Chapter 3 Total time: 42 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ True or false exercises</li> <li>○ Matching exercises</li> <li>○ Short answer exercises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The participants can listen for specific information and do true or false, matching, and short answer exercises.</li> <li>- At week 4, we switched the audiobook with brand new contents and new reading style, hence created a new experience to the students. In addition, the type of book was switched so that learners can be exposed to new vocabulary. Due to the new type of audiobook, we reduced the number of exercises too.</li> </ul>
Week 5	Audiobook: Animal Farm Chapter 4 Chapter 5 Chapter 6 Total time: 41 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Multiple choice exercises</li> <li>○ Gap-filling exercises</li> <li>○ Matching exercises</li> <li>○ Short answer exercises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The participants can listen for specific information and do multiple choice, gap-filling, matching, and short answer exercises.</li> <li>- At week 5, we figured the students are familiar with the new audiobook. Therefore, we created more assignments and increased the difficulties.</li> </ul>
Week 6	Audiobook: Animal Farm Chapter 7 Chapter 8 Chapter 9 Chapter 10 Total time: 53 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Multiple choice exercises</li> <li>○ Gap-filling exercises</li> <li>○ True or false exercises</li> <li>○ Short answer exercises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The participants can listen for specific information and do multiple choice, gap-filling, true or false, and short answer exercises.</li> <li>- At this week, we sum up the rest of the audiobook and created multiple assignments with different difficulties in order to evaluate the listening comprehension among the students.</li> </ul>
Week 7	Audiobook: The Lord of the Rings – the fellowship of the ring Book 1 – Part 1 - A long-expected party Total time: 61 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Multiple choice exercises</li> <li>○ Gap-filling exercises</li> <li>○ Short answer exercises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The participants can listen for specific information and do multiple choice, gap-filling, and short answer exercises.</li> <li>- By week 7, we switched the audiobook again with adventurous writing style and uncommon vocabulary. We wanted to examine how students react to new words and how they adapt and understand new words by guessing. The number of exercises is reduced once again.</li> </ul>
Week 8	Audiobook: The Lord of the Rings – the fellowship of the ring Book 1 – Part 2 – The shadow of the past Total time: 69 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Gap-filling exercises</li> <li>○ True or false exercises</li> <li>○ Short answer exercises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The participants can listen for specific information and do true or false, gap-filling, and short answer exercises.</li> <li>- Due to the long listening time, we remained the proportion of assignment, yet the difficulties were increased.</li> </ul>

Week 9	Audiobook: The Lord of the Rings – the fellowship of the ring Book 1 – Part 3 – Three is company Total time: 56 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Gap-filling exercises</li> <li>○ True or false exercises</li> <li>○ Short answer exercises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The participants can listen for specific information and do true or false, gap-filling, and short answer exercises.</li> <li>- At week 9, we kept following the usual steps, difficulties, and listening time.</li> </ul>
Week 10	Audiobook: The Lord of the Rings – the fellowship of the ring Book 1 – Part 4 – A shortcut to mushrooms Total time: 32 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Multiple choice exercises</li> <li>○ Gap-filling exercises</li> <li>○ Short answer exercises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The participants can listen for specific information and do multiple choice, gap-filling, and short answer exercises.</li> <li>- By the last week, we sum up with the third part of the audiobook and created several tests to evaluate the listening comprehension process.</li> </ul>

The experiment was proceeded and took place in one academic year with two listening courses. The same listening tests were given to both experimental group and non-experimental group. The two groups were observed and assisted by the researchers while only the experimental group have access to the audiobooks as well as other related materials. Meanwhile the non-experimental group continued their traditional listening methods.

The experimental group (with audiobooks) were required to show their learning process and results in the form of online marks. The researchers have already created a simple yet familiar to the students’ listening activities, the learners then took the test online and turned in their paperwork in form of pictures or doc files. They were also guided on the steps of finding the correct information, understanding long and complicated sentences, and finishing their assignments.

***Student feedback questionnaire***

First of all, the researchers asked all the students to note down their opinions toward audiobooks as well as how they viewed the process of utilizing them in learning listening. Based on their feedback, the researchers designed a post-questionnaire on Google form. The list of questions was designed to gather the participants’ feedback about audiobooks, including aspects such as procedure/steps, benefits, drawbacks, attitudes of learners and possible solutions to enhance the effectiveness of using audiobooks in listening courses/ The questionnaire was designed in a mixed format, including 3-point Likert statements, close-ended questions and open-ended question

**3.4. Data Analysis**

The quantitative analysis of data was conducted to assess the effect of the audiobooks on the students’ listening comprehension skills. Collected data were processed manually by the researchers.

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

**4.1. The current situation of listening comprehension among first-year English majors at TNUE**

***4.1.1. Results from the pre-questionnaire***

Before conducting the experiment, the researchers designed a pre-questionnaire which included a series of questions related to listening skills, audiobooks, and students’ listening comprehension. We found out that the majority of students (80%) have problems in learning listening and doing listening exercises. In addition, most of them (65%) believed that their current listening level is low (around band 3.0 to 4.0).

Specifically, a large number of students (65%) claimed that they were often unsure about what they had listened to and could not recognize all the sounds in the listening text and that they found it difficult to concentrate on the listening tasks. Likewise, more than half of the participants admitted that they missed a later part of the text while thinking about the meaning of an earlier part. Other problems include unfamiliar words and expressions (30%), and mistaking one word for another (25%).

In addition, many students claimed that they frequently forgot what they had just heard due to the length of the audio track (65%). Also, nearly half of the participants found it difficult to divide the longer sentences in the listening text into several parts to assist in comprehension and to understand the new information within a short time.

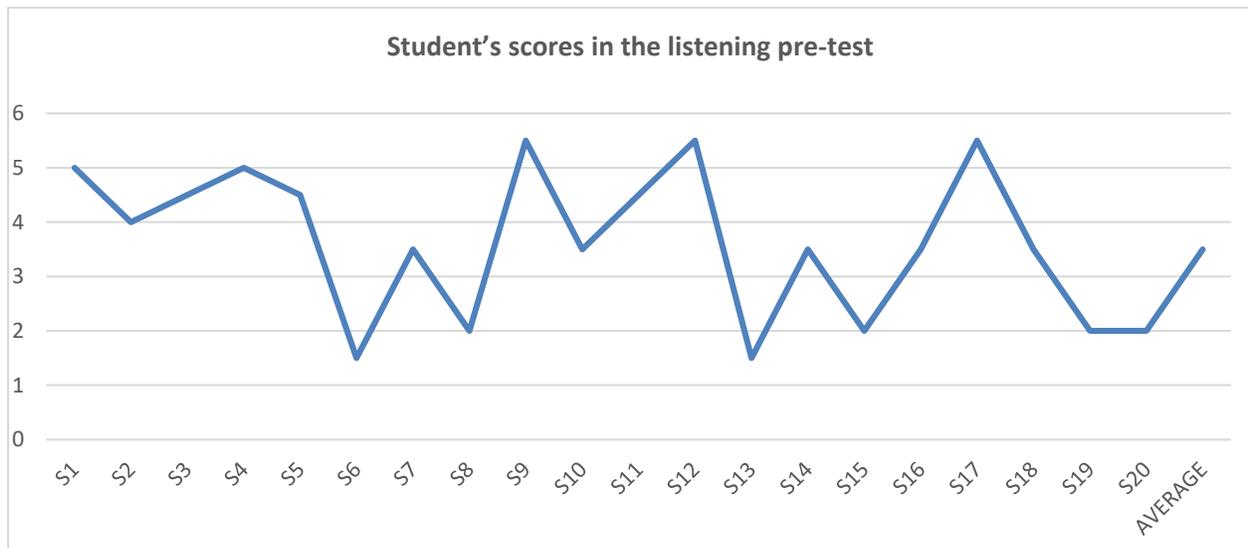
An additional problem listening for main ideas as 30% of the students put a tick for this problem whereas up to 60% of the respondents admitted that they could not identify the details of the listening text.

Finally, 75% of the students claimed that they have no knowledge or haven’t heard of audiobooks since they are not very popular in Vietnamese English classes.

***4.1.2. Results from the Pre-test***

Along with the pre-questionnaire, the researchers designed a listening pre-test to assess the student’s listening comprehension. The learners claimed to be extremely bad at listening so we designed the test based on the IELTS listening test. We adapted parts 1 and 2 of

the IELTS listening test since they are suitable for the student’s level and the results were summarized in Table 2 below. It can be seen that the students’ scores fluctuate between 1.5 and 5.5; the average score is quite low at 3.5 out of 10.

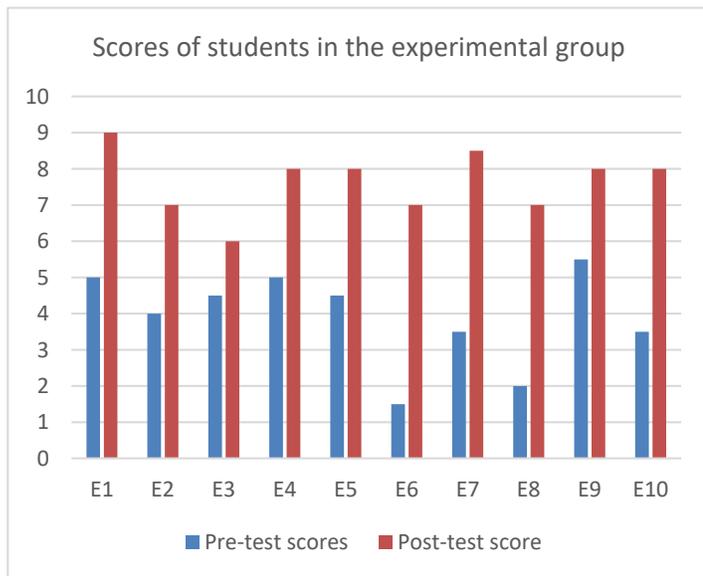


**Figure 1: Student’s scores in the pre-test**

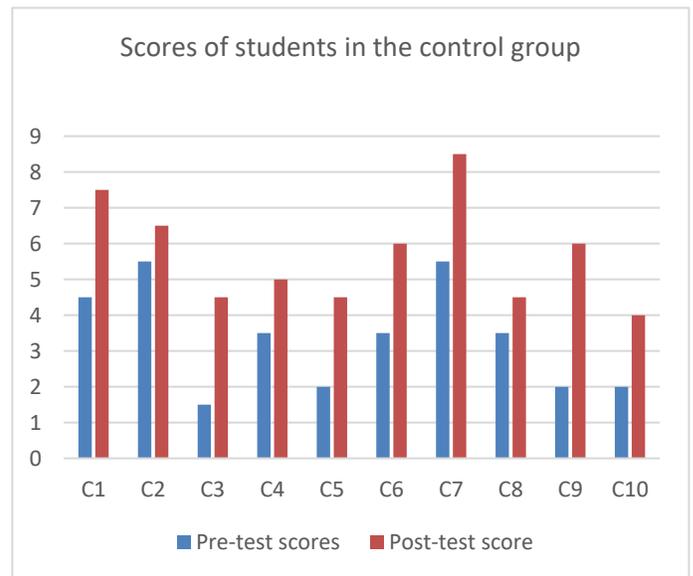
**4.2. The impacts of audiobooks on English majors’ listening comprehension**

After investigating the current situation of listening comprehension among first-year English majors at TNUE, we implemented the procedure of utilizing audiobooks to improve listening comprehension for a group of 10 students (the experimental group). The experiment lasted 10 weeks as described in Table 1. When the experiment ended, we administered the listening post-test to both the ten students in the experimental group (coded as E1-10) and the ten students in the control group (coded as C1-10), which was similar to the pre-test in terms of format and level.

In order to evaluate the influences of using audiobooks on students’ listening comprehension, the researchers compared the experimental group (with audiobooks) and the non-experimental group (without audiobooks) in terms of their listening scores in the pre-test and post-test. The following charts describe the scores in the listening pre-test and post-test gained by students in both groups.



**Figure 2: Listening scores of the experimental group**

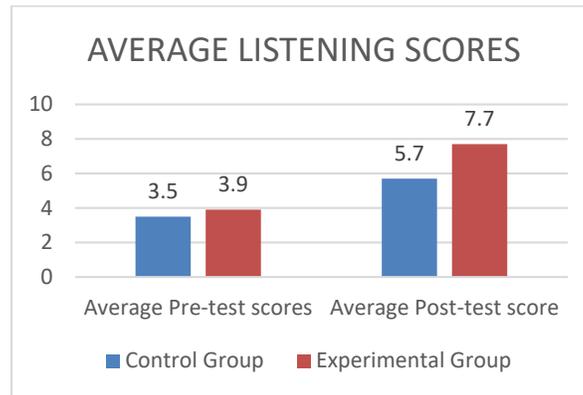


**Figure 3: Listening scores of the non-experimental group**

It is visible that the gap between pre-test scores and post-test scores of the experimental group (with audiobooks) is far bigger than that of the non-experimental group (no audiobooks). Looking at the details, the results of the pre-test for both groups are somewhat low, which fluctuate from 1.5 and 5.5. Nevertheless, after spending 10 weeks listening to audiobooks as well as doing practice exercises given by the researchers, their listening comprehension has improved significantly. It is also noticeable that the post-test scores gained

by the experimental group were mainly in the range of 6 and 9. By contrast, the post-test scores of the non-experimental group were mainly between 4 and 7.

For a more detailed analysis, the average scores of the students were calculated and revealed in the chart below:



**Figure 4: Average listening scores of students in both groups**

We also documented the progress of the students in the experimental group in Table 2. It can be seen that all of the learners made significant improvements in their listening comprehension skills.

**Table 2: Student’s progress throughout the process (experimental group)**

Students	PRE-TEST	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6	WEEK 7	WEEK 8	WEEK 9	WEEK 10	POST-TEST
E1	5	5.5	7	8	4	8	8	8	8,5	8	8,5	9
E2	4	5	8	6	5	8	7	7,5	8	8	8	7
E3	4,5	5	3	7	7	8	6	8	7,5	7,5	8	6
E4	5	5	4	3	6	7	8	7	6,5	8	8	8
E5	4,5	5	5	4	5	6	7	8	8	7,5	8	8
E6	1,5	2	4	5	6	8	7	7	6	8	7,5	7
E7	3,5	3	5	4	8	7	6	9	8	8	8	8,5
E8	2	4	7	5	7	7	5	6	6,5	7	8	7
E9	5,5	3	6	7	6	6	8	6	7	7,5	7	8
E10	3,5	4	5	6	4	5	6,5	7	7	8	7,5	8

**4.3. Feedback of the participants on the use of audiobooks**

The results of the post-questionnaire for students show that most of the participants are interested in learning English through audiobooks as well as enhancing their listening comprehension through them. Also, they would like to use audiobooks not only for study purposes but also for relaxation since they can improve multiple skills with audiobooks as the background noise. Moreover, the post-questionnaire respondents suggested that audiobooks are one of the best ways of mastering this language. The table below briefly illustrates the students’ opinions about the research, audiobooks, and the technique the researchers have used.

**Table 3: Students’ opinions toward audiobooks**

No.	Statements	Disagree	Undecided	Agree
1	Audiobooks are very good	2	1	17/20
2	Audiobooks are easy to use	1	2	17/20
3	Audiobooks are extremely helpful in learning listening	3	2	15/20
4	Using audiobooks is not difficult	2	1	17/20
5	Audiobooks should be applied widely	1	3	16/20

6	My listening comprehension has improved	2	1	17/20
7	I am more confident in listening comprehension	2	2	16/20

It is visible from the table that most of the learners have positive opinions about Audiobooks. They stated that audiobooks have been a useful tool for learning listening (15/20) as well as for improving their listening comprehension (16/20). In addition, audiobooks are considered to be easy-to-use (17/20) and little or no difficulties were spotted during the experiment (17/20). Moreover, up to 17 students in the experiment claimed that audiobooks should be applied widely to enhance the ability to listen and understand English. They also indicated that they found out that audiobooks were helpful for improving their listening comprehension and they enjoyed using audiobooks for listening and reading at the same time. They also assured that audiobooks motivated them to read and listen to more books and hence they were interested in using audiobooks as a learning tool in the future and in using them to do listening assignments as out of classrooms activities. They claimed that audiobooks made them more interested in reading and listening and more enthusiastic in developing their listening comprehension. The opinions of the experimental group about the usefulness of using audiobooks for enhancing listening comprehension were in line with the responses of students in the study of O'Day (2002). They also regarded audiobooks as good tools which are helpful and effective in developing listening skills.

From all the analysis above, it can be noticed that when students listened to audiobooks, they had numerous chances to develop ideas, revise, and comprehend. As a result, their listening comprehension increased throughout the process.

## V. CONCLUSION

### 5.1. Main finding

After having conducted the investigation of current situation through pre-questionnaire and pre-test, the experiment on audiobooks and then the feedback questionnaire, we have analyzed the results and made some discussions as presented in the previous sections. The followings are the main findings of our research:

Firstly, first-year English majors at TNUE have many listening comprehension problems relating to high speech rates, unfamiliar vocabulary, long utterances, implied meanings, challenging topics, organization of ideas, main ideas and specific information.

Secondly, the listening comprehension among the experimental group has improved greatly thanks to the use of audiobooks as their listening scores get higher and higher during the course of ten weeks listening to audiobooks and doing related exercises.

Finally, most of the students' feedback related to audiobooks are positive. They admitted that the use of audiobooks has helped them make significant improvements in listening comprehension. Actually, the audiobooks applied in the research have proven to be extremely useful thus creating a perfect environment where learners are able to read, listen and interact with the content of the assignments.

### 5.2. Conclusion

In this study, audiobooks have been proven to be an effective tool for acquiring a foreign language and comprehending it as it is spoken. Therefore, audiobooks can be considered as a new technique which should be integrated into the EFL curriculum to be applied by teachers in listening classrooms to develop listening comprehension among learners.

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