

## A Study of Problems in English Listening Comprehension of Matthayomsuksa Students

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### Abstract

This mixed-method research aimed to study the problems and strategies to solve English listening comprehension problems of Matthayomsuksa students focused on listening to the text, speaker, listener, and physical setting. Sixty students and five teachers in Matthayomsuksa at Wat Salak Nuea School, Tambon Ban Mai, Amphoe Pak kred, Nonthaburi, Thailand during the academic year 2018-2019 were participated and selected by the quota sampling techniques. The questionnaires and In-depth interviews were used as an instrument. The results of the students' questionnaires were analyzed by using percentage, mean, and standard deviation. While, In-depth interviews from teachers were analyzed by using the three competencies which were identified by Henderson (1995). The results obtained from the study indicated that, the students had a high level of problems in listening English comprehension such as the students had problems with technique words in the message, they also had difficulties to understand when the speaker spoke too fast, and they had limited vocabulary as well as poor grammar. While the speaker's sound was unclear and used poor-quality of equipment also made the causes of problems for their listening. To solve the

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problems, the students needed to have positive attitudes on English and paid more attention to speakers. Moreover, the students needed to practice listening with a native speaker and watched English media to get familiar with the English sound. Finally, they needed to increase vocabulary, grammar, slang, and idiom.

**Keywords:** English Listening Comprehension Problems, English Listening Strategies, Study of Problems in English

## Introduction

Listening is an essential part of English as a foreign language. Many studies in language learning have indicated that listening comprehension plays an important role in the learning process (Seyedeh, 2016). It should not be difficult to realize the importance of listening when we consider that it occupies about 45 per cent of the time adults spend in communication. This is significantly more than speaking, which accounts for 30 percent, and reading and writing, which make up 16 percent and nine percent respectively (Raphael Ahmed, 2015). Moreover, Abbas, (2016) stated that listening is very important in language because it provides input for the learners and without comprehending input, they cannot learn anything.

However, Abbas Pourhosein Gilakjani & Narjes Banou Sabouri (2016) found that when students listen to the English language, they face a lot of listening difficulties. Students have critical difficulties in listening comprehension because universities and schools pay more attention to writing, reading, and vocabulary. In addition, there are still many factors causing listening problems. According to Fan Yagang, (July 26, 2019) pointed out other kinds of problems which are related to students themselves from four sources: the message to be listened to, the speaker, the listener, and the physical setting are as followings;

Suradej (2011) found that three significant factors that affect to listen

related to the text were the slang, idiom expression, unfamiliar words, and the long text. Apart from that, Apirada (2008) stated that the problems of listening comprehension related to speaking can be seen in relation to natural speech, which is full of hesitation and pauses, pitch and intonation, pronunciation, varied accents, speech rate, wrong grammatical structures, and speaker's body language. Furthermore, Nualsri (2012) stated that the major problems revealed in the related studies were a limited vocabulary and difficulty with grammar and pronunciation. The students were also shy about speaking English and making mistakes in front of their friends. While Darti (2017) found that difficulty in listening comprehension because they lose concentration, felt panic cannot understand what the speaker said, this interrupts their heard. It means that failure concentrate will make them missing what the speaker said.

Improving listening comprehension is no small task but requires explicit and systematic instruction beyond vocabulary. Explicit instructional attention to vocabulary, syntactic, and grammatical structure, inferences, character's thoughts and emotions and comprehension monitoring is needed (Young-Suk Grace, 2018). Moreover, Abbas (2016) the positive and effective use of strategies affect learners' self-concept, beliefs, and attitudes towards listening. While, Apirada (2008) stated that the ways to solve listening comprehension were to exposure to different kinds of media, and learn new vocabulary, increase confidence when using English.

## Objectives of Research

1. To study the problems in English listening comprehension of Matthayomsuksa students regarding the factors from listening to the text, speaker, listener, and physical setting.
2. To find out listening strategies to solve the problems in English listening comprehension for Matthayomsuksa students.

## Research Methodology

### Sample Group

The total sample size of this mixed method research was 65 included 60 students and 5 teachers in Matthayomsuksa at Wat Salak Nuea School Tambon Ban Mai, Amphoe Pak kred, Nonthaburi, Thailand during the academic year 2018-2019 were participated and selected by the quota sampling techniques.

### Research Instruments

There were two types of instruments that use to collect data in this study included questionnaires and in-depth interview. To ascertain the validity of the questionnaires was based on Chaisiri (2011), Suradej (2011), and Tanawan (2015). Furthermore, to ascertain the reliability of the questionnaires, Cronbach's alpha was used to check the consistency of the answers from the students. The value of reliability was 0.86 which was acceptable for the instrument in this study.

### Data Collection

The researcher distributed questionnaires in Thai version to the 60 students and in-depth interviews which teachers in Matthayomsuksa at Wat Salak Nuea School during the academic year 2018-2019 for giving attitude on the problems and ways to solve English listening comprehension problems.

### Data Analysis

The data from the completed questionnaires were analyzed by computer using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Meanwhile, the data from the in-depth interviews which 5 teachers were analyzed by using the three competencies which were identified by Henderson (1995).

## Results of Research

### Finding One:

The results of the analysis of the data obtained from questionnaires and in-depth interviews on the problems and the ways to solve the problems in English listening comprehension were presented in the terms of 1) listening to the text, 2) speaker, 3) listener, and 4) physical setting.

The scale of the problems in English listening comprehension was classified into five levels of problems according to Srisaard (2010). Very low mean score use (1.00-1.50), low mean use (1.51-2.50), moderate mean score use (2.51-3.50), high mean score use (3.51-4.50), and very high mean score use (4.51-5.00) are summarized as follow;

**Table 1 Listening to the text**

| No           | Statements   | $\bar{X}$ | SD   | Level |
|--------------|--|-----------|------|-------|
| 1            | I found it difficult to understand when the content has unfamiliar word.             | 4.00      | .713 | High  |
| 2            | I found it difficult to understand when the content uses complicated structures.     | 3.97      | .863 | High  |
| 3            | I found it difficult to Interpret the meaning when very long message in the content. | 4.08      | .787 | High  |
| 4            | I found it difficult to understand when the content of the message is unfamiliar.    | 4.10      | .796 | High  |
| 5            | I found it difficult to understand when used technique words in the content.         | 4.17      | .763 | High  |
| <b>Total</b> |  | 4.06      | .054 | High  |

**Table 2 Speaker**

| No           | Statements   | $\bar{X}$ | SD   | Level |
|--------------|--|-----------|------|-------|
| 1            | I found it difficult to understand when the speaker speaks too fast.                     | 4.33      | .729 | High  |
| 2            | I found it difficult to understand when the speaker pronounced words unclear.            | 3.85      | .755 | High  |
| 3            | I found it difficult to understand when non speaker which various accent.                | 4.20      | .777 | High  |
| 4            | I found it difficult to understand when the speaker speaks too softly.                   | 3.92      | .787 | High  |
| 5            | I found it difficult to understand when speaker doesn't use non-verbal when communicate. | 3.92      | .809 | High  |
| <b>Total</b> |  | 4.04      | .030 | High  |

**Table 3 Listener**

| No           | Statements  | $\bar{X}$ | SD   | Level |
|--------------|---|-----------|------|-------|
| 1            | I found it difficult to understand when I exhausted and bored.                            | 4.05      | .872 | High  |
| 2            | I found it difficult to understand when I can't understand the message that speakers say. | 4.03      | .712 | High  |
| 3            | I found it difficult to understand when I am poor grammar.                                | 3.77      | .890 | High  |
| 4            | I found it difficult to understand when I must answer with the long sentences.            | 4.05      | .746 | High  |
| 5            | I found it difficult to understand when I have limited vocabulary.                        | 3.95      | .823 | High  |
| <b>Total</b> |   | 3.97      | .077 | High  |

**Table 4 Physical Setting**

| No           | Statements   | $\bar{X}$ | SD    | Level |
|--------------|--|-----------|-------|-------|
| 1            | I found it difficult to understand when I can't hear speakers well.              | 4.03      | .758  | High  |
| 2            | I found it difficult to understand when the sound is unclear.                    | 3.97      | .823  | High  |
| 3            | I found it difficult to understand when I sit far from speakers.                 | 3.83      | .886  | High  |
| 4            | I found it difficult to understand when speaker uses poor quality equipment.     | 3.78      | 1.027 | High  |
| 5            | I found it difficult to understand when I listen to speaker while outside noisy. | 4.03      | .843  | High  |
| <b>Total</b> |  | 3.92      | .100  | High  |

**Table 5 Finding Two**

The results of the analysis of the data obtained from questionnaires on the ways to solve the problems in English listening comprehension.

| No    | Statements   | $\bar{X}$ | SD     | Level |
|-------|--|-----------|--------|-------|
| 1     | I think I need to have positive attitudes on English.                                  | 270       | .733   | High  |
| 2     | I think I need to increase my vocabulary, grammar, slang and idiom.                    | 4.15      | .732   | High  |
| 3     | I think I need to pay more attention to the messages while speakers speak.             | 4.25      | .773   | High  |
| 4     | I think I need to watch English media to get more familiar with the English sound.     | 4.17      | .977   | High  |
| 5     | I think I need to practice my listening with native speakers, English songs, and text. | 4.23      | .767   | High  |
| Total |  | 4.21      | .10271 | High  |

### Finding form In-depth interviews

According to the results from in-depth interviews, a researcher found that among five interviewees, two of them gave the majority to the accent, followed by three of interviewees gave the students did not have the opportunity to use English in everyday life, less of English listening, limited vocabulary, poor grammar, and they were too shy to say something incorrectly. In order to help students. One of interviewees gave that the teachers should pay attention to student taught them slowly and clearly. Four of interviewees gave the teacher must use some methods such as storytelling, games, cartoons, and using variety of accents to engage the students' interest and get familiar with those accents. At the same time, the students also need to increase their vocabulary, grammar, slang and idiom to understand teachers and using English effectively.

### Conclusion and Discussion

In this section, the researcher divided into two parts as follows;

#### 1) Opinions on Problems in English Listening Comprehension

Based on research findings, the researcher found that there were various factors which affected the English listening comprehension related to listening to the text, speaker, listener, and physical setting are as followings;

According to the results of listening to the text, the biggest problems for the students was used technique words in the content, this can be easily understood that Matthayomsuksa students faced it difficult because they studied Matthayimsuksa level and Matthayomsuksa level did not so emphasize on technique words because if the students did not know the technique words, it would be difficult for them to follow course books or syllabus. This relates to the study of Suradej (2011) found that the three significant factors that affect listening related to the text were the slang, idiom expression, unfamiliar words.

The speakers spoke too fast also made the causes of problems for students' listening comprehension because students might not be able to catch any words. To support this study, Apirada (2008,) found that the problems of listening comprehension related to speaking can be seen in relation to natural speech, which is full of hesitation and pauses, pitch and intonation, pronunciation, varied accents, speech rate.

The student exhausted and bored were the biggest problems for listening because these emotions made them failure concentrate to listen. Darti (2017) stated that problems that affect the listening comprehension because they felt panic cannot understand what the speaker said, this interrupts their heard. It means that failure concentrate will make them missing what the speaker said.

The students listened to the speaker while outside noisy and they could not hear the speakers made the cause of their listening problems because these would make them missing what the speaker said. To support these finding. Suradej (2011) stated that the most significant factor related to the physical setting that leads to a listening problem is the noise. The background and environmental noise play a major role in this case since they might annoy the students while they are studying in the class.

## 2) Opinions on the Strategies to Solve the Problems

To improve themselves, the students needed to have positive attitudes on English because positive attitude on English would help students to pay more attention to the English language which they learned. Abbas (2016) found that the positive and effective use of strategies affects learners' self-concept, beliefs, and attitudes towards listening comprehension. Moreover, practiced listening with a native speaker, watched English media to get more families with the English and increased vocabulary, grammar, slang and idiom also were a good way to improve English listening comprehension. To support this study, Young-Suk (2018) stated that improving listening comprehension is no small task, but requires explicit and systematic instruction beyond vocabulary. Explicit instructional attention to vocabulary, syntactic, grammatical structure, inferences, character's thoughts and emotions, and comprehension monitoring is needed.

## Suggestions for Research

Due to the limitation of time, it was unable to cover all the points. Therefore, the researcher would like to suggest the following needed for further study;

1) This study concentrated only on problems in English listening comprehension regarding the factor from listening to the text, speaker, listener, and physical setting of Matthayomsuksa students at Wat Salak Nuea School; the further study should be conducted on other facts of English listening comprehension to learn more about other facts of the problems.

2) Further study should be conducted on the way to teach English listening comprehension of Matthayomsuksa students at Wat Salak Nuea School to apply English listening comprehension to help the students for learning English listening comprehension effectively.

3) Further study should be conducted with the students from Pathomsuksa to Matthayomsuksa at Wat Salak Nuea School to get more information on the problems in English listening comprehension.

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