

Intercultural Listening Among Vietnamese EFL Students

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Abstract

A good background in culture and listening is believed to help students successfully interact in the global community. This study, hence, quantitatively explored the levels of intercultural listening among Vietnamese students, as well as the relationship between students' intercultural listening and listening strategies. Following the sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, the study employs a survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with a sample of 80 undergraduate EFL students from a public higher education institution. The findings demonstrated that Vietnamese EFL students have high levels of intercultural listening, with a positive association between students' intercultural listening and listening strategies. The present study's qualitative data revealed that despite having never heard of 'intercultural listening' before participating in the present study, all EFL students perceived intercultural listening as a significant stimulant of listening skills and intercultural knowledge. Also, the current study showed disparities in strategies undertaken by L2 learners to boost their competence depending on students' study levels and intercultural awareness. In other words, senior students, who have been taught the subject of intercultural competence, embrace their discretion in (seeking) communication with others. In contrast, junior students primarily deploy relevant resources found on the media and Internet due to their perceived limited ability in both listening and intercultural backgrounds. Accordingly, the current study recommends the integration of intercultural listening instruction into the curriculum to assist Vietnamese EFL students build up their competence from the early stage of study.

Keywords: Intercultural Listening, Intercultural Competence, Intercultural Communication, Vietnamese EFL Students

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Background Information and Problem Statement

The linguistic background is considered indispensable to second language (L2) learners (Nunan & Lamb, 1996), and of language skills, listening is considered the primary means for L2 learners to acquire a language (Rost, 2013). Also, listening is the fundamental element of communication skills because the establishment of communication may not be ongoing if comprehension of utterance is not achieved among listeners (Rivers, 1966). However, simply having a linguistic background may not be enough to ensure success when talking with people from other cultures (Bennett & Bennett, 2004). Language, according to social science, is thought to play an important role in intercultural communication due to its unique association with culture (Bennett, 1993; Hofstede & Bond, 1991; Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012; Yunlong, 2014), which could impossibly be separable (Yu et al., 2014), resulting in the necessity for solid knowledge of a given culture to aid the learning process of a (foreign) language (Kim, 2001) and improve one's intercultural communicative competence (Bennett, 1993; Chen & Starosta, 2000). A social or cultural blunder, once happened, can become far more serious and may bring bitter experiences to interlocutors than linguistic mistakes in (inter)cultural communication (Bennett, 1984; Celce-Murcia, 2007). Because language and culture share a unique affinity, Bennet & Bennet (2003) claimed that language transmits culture, and culture feeds language with its contents. Also, since "language starts as a social speech, as dialogue" (Walqui, 2006, p. 161), learning a second language should require interaction between interlocutors so that the sophistication of the language can be inter-culturally communicated (Bennett, 1993), resulting in the achievement of intercultural sensitivity (Chen & Starosta, 2000) and effective intercultural communication among culturally-distinct people (Deardorff et al., 2012). Considering the importance of intercultural communicative competence, which can be acquired through listening and comprehending cultural meanings in intercultural contexts, the present study places its focus on exploring Vietnamese L2 learners' listening to others in intercultural communication contexts and their awareness of listening comprehension.

Research Questions

In an attempt to explore the levels of intercultural listening among Vietnamese EFL students, the present study quantitatively and qualitatively examines the following research questions:

- Research question 1: What is the intercultural listening level of Vietnamese students?
- Research question 2: What is Vietnamese students' level of listening strategies?
- Research question 3: What is the relationship between intercultural listening and listening strategies?
- Research question 4: How do EFL students perceive the relationship between intercultural listening and listening strategies?
- Research question 5: How do students develop their intercultural listening?

Literature Review

The increasing need for intercultural communication might be because of distinct cultural values that differentiate one culture from others (Nguyen et al., 2006), shaping peculiar characteristics within a continuum of cultures (Irwin, 1996) and differences in meanings while listening to others (Ostermeier, 1995), but also causing differences in individuals' language consciousness and behavior (Brunfaut, n.d.; Ufimtseva, 2014). Based on the perspective of the fact that knowledge, attitude, and skills (ASK) can be constituted to

produce a global listener, Beall (2010) proposed necessary guidelines for effective intercultural communication, including (1) Being prepared to listen; (2) Learning to control internal and external distractions; (3) Behaving as a good listener: stop talking, let others have a chance, do not interrupt, concentrate on what is said, not who is saying it, or what the speaker is doing; (4) Being good listeners by maintaining eye contact with speakers if it is a part of their culture; (5) Being good listeners by learning the “rules” of the culture; (6) Being good listeners by asking questions at appropriate times and maintaining flexibility as they carefully listen to the speaker’s views; (7) Remembering that dialects, accents, and “different” vocal dynamics can but should not distract, learn to focus on the message; (8) Learning to ask appropriate questions; (9) Remembering that all cultures and co-cultures have both similarities and differences, we should not focus on differences; and (10) Enjoying the journey.

Research has suggested that listening comprehension and context are related (Ridgway, 2000; Selamat & Sidhu, 2011; Shabani & Malekdar, 2016). Students, who are from Confucian Heritage Culture nations, become non-native speakers of English and may face various challenges (Ho, 2020), including listening comprehension probably due to differences in cultural values (Chiu, 2009). One of the main reasons for this is that listening comprehension requires more than just understanding the words spoken because literal meanings announced through words may challenge listeners in comprehending the intended meaning (Guan, 2019). Rather than that, meanings are also constructed based on listeners’ prior knowledge, and especially the context of interaction (Vandergrift & Goh, 2009). Listening comprehension in such cases requires listeners to possess ‘sociocultural competence’ to achieve intercultural communicative competence (Celce-Murcia, 2007), not merely literal meanings through words, sounds, grammar, or other linguistic backgrounds (Guan, 2019). In other words, with a rich understanding of the social life, history, and literature of the target community, listeners can understand sociocultural meanings expressed in that native context (Celce-Murcia, 2007). Language difficulties and cultural differences are two of the various challenges encountered by students (Campbell & Li, 2008; Ho, 2021), listening comprehension can be approached as a means to diagnose the cultural domains possessed by students before necessary academic support can be offered to optimize their cultural and academic experiences. Based on the theory of metacognition, Vandergrift et al. (2006) developed and validated a framework underpinned by the model of metacognitive knowledge to produce a listening questionnaire and perceived uses of strategies while listening to oral texts, comprising five factors: problem-solving, planning and evaluation, translation, person knowledge, and directed attention.

Problem-solving refers to a group of strategies used by listeners to infer meanings they do not understand. While listening, to deduce the meaning of unknown words, it is essential to deploy techniques such as using the known words, a general idea of a text, or personal experience and general knowledge to interpret the communicated texts. These strategies are about the problem-solving processes of an individual while listening and conversing with others. *Planning and evaluation* represent necessary strategies listeners use to prepare themselves for listening, and then evaluate the outcomes of their endeavors. In this case, one should have a plan for listening so that s/he can think about similar texts to guide their listening comprehension, have a goal in mind while listening, and periodically check her/his satisfaction with the ongoing interpretation while listening before the evaluation can proceed.

The use of language is considered an instrument to facilitate inner thoughts to be transferred into outer words (Vygotsky, 1962); i.e. one thinks in an inner language before externalizing

the outcomes of thoughts, so this mental process probably influences the first language in listening comprehension of the target language (Brunfaut, n.d.). It seems the dynamic process of the inner and outer language relates to the third factor offered by Vandergrift et al. (2006), namely *mental translation*. However, this factor should be avoided by L2 learners if they want to become skilled listeners.

Person knowledge refers to the inclusion of judgments about one’s learning abilities and knowledge about internal and external factors that affect the success or failure of one’s learning, which then results in learners’ linguistic confidence in L2 listening, the level of anxiety, and self-efficacy. Finally, *directed attention* represents strategies used by listeners to concentrate and stay on task. For this to be successful, listeners should have an understanding of the purpose or demands of learning tasks, getting back on track whenever concentration is lost. More importantly, one should not give up when encountering understanding problems. According to Harris (2003), as texts and utterances are interpreted in a communicative context, culturally-bound cues or other non-verbal clues involved may add or change the literal meaning of an utterance in face-to-face communication. The use of the same outer language (i.e. English), hence, may not be successful, especially when listening comprehension over cultural differences may not be considered. According to Bao and Guan (2019), metacognitive listening strategies are significant to L2 learners because they help build up one’s ability to understand her/his mental processes in a learning context, manage and supervise the use of strategies, and evaluate mental processes for managing difficulties during listening. Such manipulation functions are believed to help L2 learners define task objectives and direct their attention to accomplish listening tasks. In consideration of cultural differences resulting in possible difficulties in listening among culturally distinct interlocutors, yet mutual understanding is necessary and becomes a desirable achievement among L2 students, the framework of Vandergrift et al. (2006), hence, is suitable and chosen for the present study.

Methods

Research Setting and Participants

The research was carried out at a public institution in Hanoi, Vietnam. Eighty students took part in the first phase during the first semester of the academic year 2023-2024, as shown in the table below.

| Number of Participants | | | | Total | Gender of Participants | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------|------------------------|--------|------|
| 1 st year | 2 nd year | 3 rd year | 4 th year | | - | Female | Male |
| 15 | 25 | 15 | 25 | 80 | 68 | 10 | 2 |

Table 1: Survey Participants

In the qualitative phase, nine students joined the interviews, as stated in the table below:

| No. | Participants | Abbreviation | Gender | Year of Study |
|-----|--------------|--------------|--------|-----------------|
| 1 | Student 1 | S1 | Female | 1 st |
| 2 | Student 2 | S2 | Female | 2 nd |
| 3 | Student 3 | S3 | Female | 2 nd |
| 4 | Student 4 | S4 | Female | 2 nd |
| 5 | Student 5 | S5 | Female | 4 th |
| 6 | Student 6 | S6 | Female | 4 th |
| 7 | Student 7 | S7 | Female | 2 nd |
| 8 | Student 8 | S8 | Female | 4 th |
| 9 | Student 9 | S9 | Female | 4 th |

Table 2: Participants of the Interview

Instrument

Rationale for Questionnaire

A questionnaire was used in the current study to serve three purposes: (1) to evaluate intercultural listening among EFL learners, (2) to assess their listening strategy, and (3) to investigate the relationship between students' intercultural listening and listening strategy. In this regard, a questionnaire (Table 3) with two components of a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used for the study purposes.

Both sets of questionnaires included in the study were designed by renowned researchers including the *Efficient Listening Behavior* of Imhof (1998), the *guidelines* of Beall (2010), and the *Metacognitive knowledge about listening* of Vandergrift et al. (2006), so its reliability was recognized. Moreover, the study context focuses on EFL learners although the ideas discussed are aimed at foreign language students. Section 3 included questions on respondents' personal information, such as their age, gender grade level, and desire to participate in the interview. Finally, Section 4 invited respondents to give personal contact details in case they wanted to participate in the semi-structured interview in the second phase.

| | Constructs | Items | Sum | Total |
|--|---------------------|--|-----|-------|
| Section 1 Intercultural listening | Knowledge | 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 14, 21, 22, 24, 26, 31, 32, 41 | 15 | 43 |
| | Skill | 2, 13, 19, 25, 28, 30, 33, 34, 35, 36, 42, 43 | 12 | |
| | Attitude | 5, 7, 10, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 23, 27, 29, 37, 38, 39, 40 | 16 | |
| Section 2 Listening strategy | Directed attention | 2, 6, 12, 16 | 4 | 21 |
| | Mental translation | 4, 11, 18 | 3 | |
| | Person knowledge | 3, 8, 15 | 3 | |
| | Planning/evaluation | 1, 10, 14, 20, 21 | 5 | |
| | Problem-solving | 5, 7, 9, 13, 17, 19 | 6 | |

Table 3: Constructs of the Questionnaire

The study's interview includes open-ended questions to explore EFL students' perspectives of intercultural listening and the potential relationship between intercultural listening and listening strategy. The interview guide was created and used for each interview. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative interviews require an interview guide comprising a heading, interviewer instructions, interviewee questions, and a thank-you message, aiming to explore the qualitative data in the second phase and provide extensive explanations and reasons for initial quantitative findings (Creswell, 2014, 2015). In this case, the semi-structured interview questions delve into students' thoughts on intercultural listening and the relationship between intercultural listening and listening ability.

Data Collection and Analysis

In the first phase, quantitative data acquired by questionnaire survey were statistically evaluated using the guidelines of Pallant (2013). The process involved three steps: (1) screening and cleaning the data, (2) preparing the variables for analysis, and (3) selecting and applying statistical techniques to the study.

To seek the proper answers to the research questions, descriptive and inferential statistics analyses were employed.

| Research questions | Tools | Aim to find | Type of analysis |
|--|-------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| What is the intercultural listening level of Vietnamese students? | Questionnaire, Section 1 | EFL students' ability to intercultural listening | Descriptive |
| What is the listening strategy level of Vietnamese students? | Questionnaire, Section 2 | EFL students' degree in listening strategy | Descriptive |
| What is the relationship between intercultural listening and listening comprehension of L2 students? | Questionnaire, Sections 1 & 2 | The correlation between intercultural listening and listening strategy | Descriptive and inferential analysis |
| What are EFL students' perceptions of the relationship between intercultural listening and listening strategies? | Interview | EFL students' perceptions of the relationship between intercultural listening and listening strategies | Inferential analysis |
| How do students develop their intercultural listening? | Interview | EFL students' development strategies for intercultural listening | Inferential analysis |

Table 4: Research Questions and Corresponding Analysis Techniques

To investigate the level of intercultural listening and listening strategy among EFL students, the respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement using a five-point Likert scale; in particular, the highest mean score (=5) indicated the most agreeable items, while the lowest mean score (=1) indicated the least agreeable ones. Paige et al. (2003) referred to the Likert scaling technique score statement, which indicated the level of agreement.

| Rating | Mean | Agreement level |
|--------|-------------|-----------------|
| 5 | 4.51 – 5.00 | Very high |
| 4 | 3.51 – 4.50 | High |
| 3 | 2.51 – 3.50 | Not sure |
| 2 | 1.51 – 2.50 | Low |
| 1 | 1.00 – 1.50 | Very low |

Source: Paige et al. (2003)

Table 5: Interpretation of Five-Point Likert Scale

| Variable | Number of items | Cronbach's alpha |
|-------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Intercultural listening | 43 | .946 |
| Listening strategy | 21 | .891 |

Table 6: Results of Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient

Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the intercultural listening scale and listening strategy were characterized as 'excellent' and 'good' respectively, indicating that the items are reliable (Cohen et al., 2007).

The second phase of interview data management preparation consisted of two major steps: transcribing and organizing data. First, all the recorded interviews were transcribed from the form of audio files into text data files. In the next step, all recorded interviews were transcribed from audio files to text files for the analysis step.

The current study's qualitative data were examined and grouped into themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and participants' responses to research questions were generated as a result of thematic analysis.

Summary of Findings

The Intercultural Listening of EFL Students

The results of this section are reported by mean score. In the Intercultural Listening Scale (ILS), language learners scored 167.81.

| Dimensions | Mean | Agreement |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| Attitude | 3.88 | High |
| Skill | 3.86 | High |
| Knowledge | 3.95 | High |
| Total | 3.89 | High |

Table 7: Mean Scores of Dimensions of the Intercultural Listening Scale

Table 7 sums up the mean scores for each dimension of the intercultural listening scale, showing that the participants had high scores for the three constructs. The total mean score on the intercultural listening scale is 3.89, making the agreement level of 'high'. Each construct of intercultural listening is analyzed in detail.

Attitude

| Item | Attitude | Mean | Std. Deviation | Label |
|---------------------------|---|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| 5 | I think listening to what is <i>not</i> said is more important than what is said. | 3.63 | .946 | High |
| 7 | I often try to find a seat for the purpose of optimal listening. | 3.94 | .752 | High |
| 10 | I tend to listen to others with open body posture. | 3.95 | .778 | High |
| 12 | I tend to be less concerned about what I would like to say. | 2.91 | 1.070 | Not sure |
| 15 | I think listening to the intended meaning is more important than listening to just the words. | 4.14 | .725 | High |
| 16 | I suppose one's behavior might not be fully understood only by means of listening. | 3.79 | .741 | High |
| 17 | I tend to stop activities on the side to pay complete attention to others. | 3.84 | .863 | High |
| 18 | I will concentrate on topics which I am interested in. | 4.05 | .855 | High |
| 20 | I think while listening, I should pay attention with my heart, eyes, and ears. | 4.06 | .752 | High |
| 23 | I believe listening with an open mind helps one communicate more effectively. | 4.34 | .711 | High |
| 27 | I often stop talking so that others can talk. | 3.89 | .763 | High |
| 29 | To me, maintaining eye-contact while listening to others is important. | 4.01 | .864 | High |
| 37 | I try not to focus on cultural differences while listening to others. | 3.69 | .894 | High |
| 38 | I always enjoy the chances to listen to culturally distinct people. | 3.91 | .732 | High |
| 39 | I believe that one can learn to be a good listener in intercultural contexts. | 4.01 | .864 | High |
| 40 | I think it is necessary for listeners to signal interest to the speaker. | 3.96 | .849 | High |
| Overall mean score | | 3.88 | | High |

N=80

Table 8: Descriptive Results of Attitude

Skill

| Item | Skill | Mean | Std. Deviation | Label |
|---------------------------|---|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| 2 | I am taught (by my parents) to be a good listener. | 3.73 | .886 | High |
| 13 | I often practice listening skills (e.g. with computer-aided listening apps). | 3.87 | .769 | High |
| 19 | While listening, I often structure the information heard. | 3.82 | .776 | High |
| 25 | I often learn to control or avoid possible distractions while listening to culturally distinct people. | 3.96 | .737 | High |
| 28 | I often pay attention to what the speaker is talking about instead of what s/he is doing. | 3.69 | .866 | High |
| 30 | I try to avoid making personal judgements on cultural differences while listening to culturally distinct people. | 4.02 | .826 | High |
| 33 | I think good listeners know how to maintain flexibility while listening to the speaker's views. | 4.14 | .807 | High |
| 34 | As a good listener, one should know to focus on the message communicated, rather than avoid differences in dialects or accents. | 3.96 | .803 | High |
| 35 | I often try to avoid being distracted by cultural factors while listening to culturally distinct people. | 3.75 | .834 | High |
| 36 | I can ask appropriate questions while listening to others. | 3.75 | .819 | High |
| 42 | I tend to be patient and do not challenge the speaker with questions before s/he has a chance to develop her/his ideas fully. | 3.98 | .795 | High |
| 43 | I often give feedback both verbally and nonverbally to others regardless of her/his cultural differences. | 3.71 | .930 | High |
| Overall mean score | | 3.86 | | High |

N=80

Table 9: Descriptive Results of Skill

Knowledge

| Item | Knowledge | Mean | Std. Deviation | Label |
|---------------------------|--|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| 1 | I think listening is important in my own culture. | 4.39 | .684 | High |
| 3 | I think listening is the most important skill in intercultural communication. | 3.96 | .702 | High |
| 4 | I make my expectations clear to myself before listening. | 3.75 | .849 | High |
| 6 | I suppose someone may have bitter experiences due to the inability of intercultural listening. | 3.94 | .801 | High |
| 8 | I think intercultural listening gives clues to one's behavior. | 4.07 | .652 | High |
| 9 | To me, listening can be taught through EFL classes. | 4.01 | .720 | High |
| 11 | I believe that I am expected (e.g. by my parents or teachers) to become a good listener. | 4.06 | .876 | High |
| 14 | In my culture, one might be punished (e.g. by parents or teachers) for her/his failure to listen. | 3.15 | 1.126 | Not sure |
| 21 | I think listening ability in intercultural contexts requires sensitivity to others' cultural practices and traditions. | 4.17 | .708 | High |
| 22 | I suppose by listening to the other's cultural values, one can achieve effective intercultural communication. | 4.09 | .697 | High |
| 24 | I like to prepare the necessary background knowledge prior to listening to others. | 3.92 | .808 | High |
| 26 | I think intercultural listening can be more effective with background on others' cultural practices and traditions. | 4.19 | .713 | High |
| 31 | I think to become a good listener, one should learn the rules of the culture. | 3.85 | .797 | High |
| 32 | I suppose good listeners know appropriate times to ask questions. | 4.10 | .836 | High |
| 41 | I keep in mind that what one believes to understand is not necessarily what the speaker wants to say. | 3.66 | .980 | High |
| Overall mean score | | 3.95 | | High |

N=80

Table 10: Descriptive Results of Knowledge

The Listening Strategy of EFL Students

The results of this section are reported by mean score. In the Listening Strategy Scale (LSS), language learners scored 79.90.

| Dimensions | Mean | Agreement |
|---------------------|-------------|------------------|
| Directed attention | 3.76 | High |
| Mental translation | 3.56 | High |
| Person knowledge | 3.48 | Not sure |
| Planning/evaluation | 3.82 | High |
| Problem-solving | 4.10 | High |
| Total | 3.80 | High |

Table 11: Mean Score of the Listening Strategy of EFL Students

Table 11 sums up the mean scores for each dimension of the listening strategies of EFL students, showing that the participants had high scores for the five constructs. The total mean score on the listening strategies is 3.80, making the agreement level of 'high'. Each construct of the listening strategies is analyzed in detail.

Directed Attention

| Item | Directed attention | Mean | Std. Deviation | Label |
|---------------------------|---|-------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| 2 | I focus harder on the text when I have trouble understanding it. | 4.11 | .656 | High |
| 6 | When my mind wanders, I recover my concentration right away. | 3.84 | .787 | High |
| 12 | I try to get back on track when I lose concentration. | 4.06 | .681 | High |
| 16 | When I have difficulty understanding what I hear, I give up and stop listening. | 3.04 | 1.195 | Not sure |
| Overall mean score | | 3.76 | | High |

N=80

Table 12: Descriptive Results of Directed Attention

Mental Translation

| Item | Mental translation | Mean | Std. Deviation | Label |
|---------------------------|--|-------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| 4 | I translate in my head as I listen. | 3.74 | .868 | High |
| 11 | I translate keywords as I listen. | 3.89 | .827 | High |
| 18 | I translate word by word, as I listen. | 3.06 | 1.140 | Not sure |
| Overall mean score | | 3.76 | | High |

N=80

Table 13: Descriptive Results of Mental Translation

Person Knowledge

| Item | Person knowledge | Mean | Std. Deviation | Label |
|---------------------------|---|-------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 3 | I find that listening in English is more difficult than reading, speaking, or writing in English. | 3.54 | .885 | High |
| 8 | I feel that listening comprehension in English is a challenge for me. | 3.59 | 1.015 | High |
| 15 | I don't feel nervous when I listen to English. | 3.32 | 1.041 | Not sure |
| Overall mean score | | 3.48 | | Not sure |

N=80

Table 14: Descriptive Results of Person Knowledge

Planning/Evaluation

| Item | Planning/evaluation | Mean | Std. Deviation | Label |
|---------------------------|---|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| 1 | Before I start to listen, I have a plan in my head for how I am going to listen. | 3.79 | .867 | High |
| 10 | Before listening, I think of similar texts that I may have listened to. | 3.79 | .822 | High |
| 14 | After listening, I think back to how I listened, and about what I might do differently next time. | 3.90 | .851 | High |
| 20 | As I listen, I periodically ask myself if I am satisfied with my level of comprehension. | 3.79 | .882 | High |
| 21 | I have a goal in mind as I listen. | 3.85 | .858 | High |
| Overall mean score | | 3.82 | | High |

N=80

Table 15: Descriptive Results of Planning/Evaluation

Problem-Solving

| Item | Problem-solving | Mean | Std. Deviation | Label |
|---------------------------|--|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| 5 | I use the words I understand to guess the meaning of the words I don't understand. | 4.24 | .621 | High |
| 7 | As I listen, I compare what I understand with what I know about the topic. | 4.10 | .608 | High |
| 9 | I use my experience and knowledge to help me understand. | 4.20 | .582 | High |
| 13 | As I listen, I quickly adjust my interpretation if I realize that it is not correct. | 3.98 | .763 | High |
| 17 | I use the general idea of the text to help me guess the meaning of the words that I don't understand. | 4.14 | .631 | High |
| 19 | When I guess the meaning of a word, I think back to everything else that I have heard, to see if my guess makes sense. | 3.95 | .778 | High |
| Overall mean score | | 4.10 | | High |

N=80

Table 16: Descriptive Results of Problem-Solving

The Correlation Between Students' Intercultural Listening and Listening Strategy

Based on the results of the Pearson correlation, it was found that intercultural listening and listening strategy were positively related ($r = .556$, $p = .000$).

| | | IL | LS |
|-----------|---------------------|-----------|-----------|
| IL | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .556** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 80 | 80 |
| LS | Pearson Correlation | .556** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 80 | 80 |

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 17: Pearson Correlation Between Intercultural Listening and Listening Strategy

Next, the correlations between the constructs of each variable should be meticulously considered. Regarding intercultural listening, there were significant relations between the dimensions (shown in Table 18). Noticeably, there were strong, significant correlations between knowledge and skill ($r=.821$, $p=.000$), skill and attitude ($r=.897$, $p=.000$), and knowledge and attitude ($r=.904$, $p=.000$). It shows that the qualifications of intercultural listening among EFL students are interrelated so that their competence to become global listeners is accomplished.

Furthermore, significant correlations can be seen between the constructs of listening strategy and ones of intercultural listening, including (a) directed attention and knowledge ($r=.507$, $p=.000$), directed attention and skill ($r=.436$, $p=.000$), and directed attention and attitude ($r=.519$, $p=.000$); (b) the similar patterns could be applied for the correlation for mental translation, planning/evaluation and problem solving with the sig figures of 95% confidence interval for p .

| | | Knowledge | Skill | Attitude | Directed attention | Mental translation | Person knowledge | Planning evaluation | Problem-solving |
|--|---------------------|-----------|--------|----------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Knowledge | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .821** | .904** | .507** | .271* | .246* | .442 | .609** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 | .000 | .000 | .015 | .028 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 |
| Skill | Pearson Correlation | .821** | 1 | .897** | .436** | .357** | .255* | .507** | .505 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | | .000 | .000 | .001 | .023 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 |
| Attitude | Pearson Correlation | .904** | .897** | 1 | .519** | .324** | .300** | .456** | .562** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | | .000 | .003 | .007 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 |
| Directed attention | Pearson Correlation | .507** | .436** | .519** | 1 | .539** | .653** | .674** | .672** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 |
| Mental translation | Pearson Correlation | .271* | .357** | .324** | .539** | 1 | .654** | .577* | .406** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .015 | .001 | .003 | .000 | | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 |
| Person knowledge | Pearson Correlation | .246* | .255* | .300** | .653** | .654** | 1 | .514* | .325* |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .028 | .023 | .007 | .000 | .000 | | .000 | .003 |
| | N | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 |
| Planning evaluation | Pearson Correlation | .442** | .507** | .456** | .674** | .577** | .514** | 1** | .662** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | | .000 |
| | N | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 |
| Problem-solving | Pearson Correlation | .609** | .505** | .562** | .672** | .406** | .325** | .662** | 1** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000** | .000** | .000** | .000* | .003* | .000** | |
| | N | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 |
| **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). | | | | | | | | | |
| *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). | | | | | | | | | |

Table 18: Pearson Correlation Between Dimensions of Intercultural Listening and Listening Strategy

However, there was a medium correlation between person knowledge and attitude, person knowledge and skill, and person knowledge and knowledge with Pearson coefficients of less than .300 and sig numbers of more than .005. This reveals that the constructs of listening strategy and intercultural listening mostly have strong correlations. This uncovers the fact that an individual who possesses high levels of listening ability can have a high degree of intercultural listening and vice versa.

Students' Perceptions Towards the Relationship Between Intercultural Listening and Listening Strategy and Their Development of Intercultural Listening

In the follow-up interviews, participants were asked to give further explanations and viewpoints on the relationship between intercultural listening and listening strategies. The results were as follows.

All participants interviewed, who admitted that they did not know about 'intercultural listening' until they participated in the survey and interviews, agreed that there was a close relationship between intercultural listening and listening strategies. First- and second-year students, who studied English at the University for a few semesters, seemed to emphasize the skills and knowledge of listening and consider that intercultural listening appears to be a stimulant to enhance their listening ability for some reasons. First, with good listening strategies, one can boost vocabulary and background knowledge in various topics, resulting in her/his better performance on the listening tests at school. In that case, their listening

scores can be improved owing to their competence in intercultural listening. This can be seen in the following interview extracts:

Intercultural listening can help me perform better at the listening test because I can grasp ideas more quickly thanks to my understanding of background knowledge. A good listener doesn't mean a good intercultural listener because one may focus on words or keywords only instead of getting the general meanings of the speech. (S2/44)

When you are listening to people, you should understand the 'deep meaning', not only the surface language. You need to look at their behaviors, and manners, not just listening to words. So I think if we have good intercultural listening, we have a high level of listening ability as well. (S4/52)

Fourth-year students, however, who have much more experience in L2 learning, stated their ideas with a strong focus on knowledge and attitude.

When you have good listening ability, it means that you can listen to others' pronunciation and understand the words or literal meanings of their talk. But without knowledge of culture, you may misunderstand or not know how to denote the meanings to understand what they say. (S6/48)

A person can be good at intercultural listening because s/he has broad knowledge about that culture... On the other hand, one can be good at listening ability but not good at intercultural listening because if they only listen well but don't have the same mind or open mind, they can make judgments right away, and that prevents them from listening well the rest of the information communicated. (S5/55)

Noticeably, through the perspectives of senior students who had some work experiences, they paid plenty of concern to accents of culturally distinct people whose strong voices may become inhibiting factors of their intercultural listening. To develop their intercultural listening competence, participants shared different approaches. Junior EFL students commonly utilize abundant sources of media widely available on social channels, aiming to enrich their background knowledge of cultures. For instance, they tend to watch movies from native cultures or non-native cultures (e.g. Korea, China), listen to daily news in English or podcasts on topics such as exploration of new lands and cultures, or read plenty of culture-related materials in the library, etc. Also, as they were in the middle of intensive language programs, junior EFL students stated they made use of current learning materials to acquire further cultural knowledge and listening skills. For example, through the reading exercises, they could enhance personal background on the cultures of nations.

Nevertheless, senior EFL students sought more practical approaches to develop their intercultural listening. As mentioned in the interviews, they stated that assignments given by teachers became a stimulant for their mandatory acquisition of cultural knowledge. Besides, communicating with foreign peers (native and non-native ones) could be a good opportunity for their enhancement of intercultural competence. Additionally, to continually enrich their background, fourth-year EFL students thought that self-learning knowledge should be frequently equipped by students even after graduation so that their attitudes can be further enhanced. Once one can have an open-minded attitude and nurture her/his curiosity,

knowledge can be excitedly acquired throughout their whole life. In that way, their intercultural listening can be sustained and boosted.

Discussion and Recommendation

As the present study aims to explore EFL students' intercultural listening and its relationship with their listening strategies, necessary findings could be discussed.

First, the fact that participants of the study possess a high level of intercultural listening with high degrees of attitude, skill, and knowledge shows that the training programs delivered to EFL students have been effective since they have been acquiring intercultural listening through their second language learning process. However, upon their confession of having never heard or known about 'intercultural listening' until they joined the survey and interview, the difference between the two groups (junior vs. senior EFL students) can be seen in terms of knowledge, skill, and attitude. When one can be introduced to the subject of an intercultural topic, her/his knowledge can be academically strengthened, and then that individual's preparation for intercultural listening can be consolidated consequently. Meanwhile, as cultural values are acquired, their attitude and sensitivity can be remarkably improved (Nguyen, 2023a).

The finding aligns with the studies conducted by Zhou and Griffiths (2011) and Chen and Wang (2018) which revealed that students seem to lack knowledge of common Western customs and values and cannot differentiate between local and Western culture, resulting in their avoidance of communication and low level of confidence. Furthermore, students in such studies considered inhibiting factors of their smooth communication over cultures were due to poor listening comprehension and habit of thinking in Chinese (Zhou & Griffiths, 2011). This raises the notion that junior students' training classes should focus on intercultural listening skills so that intercultural learning can begin early in the program rather than waiting until the third or fourth year. To enrich students' intercultural knowledge and listening skills, a purposeful curriculum and experiential learning should be considered and embedded in the programs (Deardorff, 2014). This not only benefits EFL students' competence but also sustains their learning motivation (Nguyen, 2023c) as they dynamically seek related sources for self-practice and improve attitudes and confidence in intercultural communication settings.

Second, participants of the present study have a high level of listening strategies. In particular, they possess high degrees of problem-solving, planning/evaluation, directed attention, and mental translation. Those are indispensable for one to accomplish listening tasks (Bao & Guan, 2019; Boonkit, N.d.; Graham, 2006). However, the last factor of listening strategies, namely *person knowledge*, is at the lowest level compared to the other factors. Reflecting this in the literature, 'person knowledge' as a technique of listening refers to learners' linguistic confidence and their level of anxiety experienced in L2 listening (Vandergrift et al., 2006). This finding, indeed, is in line with the present study's qualitative data as the majority of them (including senior students) confessed that fear of listening to others, regardless of the recorded materials or culturally different interlocutors, is an inhibiting factor of intercultural listening.

Third, it is worth noticing that junior EFL students acknowledge their inadequate proficiency in English (e.g. grammar, vocabulary), which makes them reluctant to listen and converse with foreign peers. The fact that students of the present study have the propensity to be timid

or demotivated to communicate with others may lead to the furtherance of limited knowledge and experience in intercultural communication consequently. Meanwhile, because culture is regarded as the fifth dimension of the language besides the other four language skills (Yu et al., 2014), the integration of culture in language instruction can help build up students' intercultural communication, which is believed to be a stimulant of language learning motivation [see *Mirzaei and Forouzandeh (2013)*, *Badrkoobi (2018)*, *Nguyen (2023a)*, *Nguyen (2023b)*].

Also, students may misunderstand or fail to comprehend words or the body language of others, which is another deterrent. This may be because their comprehension of verbal communication with others is still limited. From this perspective, it can be inferred that EFL students' background knowledge of (inter)cultural listening and communication has not been strong enough, resulting in limitations in their attitudes, skills, and adaptation to new communication settings (Akhtar et al., 2015; Bodycott, 2012). This finding leads to a recommendation that first-year students should be required to take intercultural listening courses as a part of the language programs; i.e. the dimension of culture should be an indispensable component of the language teaching and learning to develop L2 learners' cultural knowledge and gain awareness of listening in various contexts.

Fourth, upon their self-evaluation of intercultural listening levels, EFL students have a variety of approaches to develop their competence. Junior students primarily use the free and easily accessible Internet and media to develop their cultural knowledge and skills. Some are interested in watching movies from non-native cultures (such as Korea or China) to enhance their cultural background. Senior students, on the other hand, are looking for more practical techniques to help facilitate their employment prospects. In particular, they primarily gain on-the-job experience in real-life communication with international (native and non-native) peers to explore other people's cognition and communication patterns. This allows students to establish themselves in the so-called English communication environment, and they feel that their intercultural listening abilities will increase dramatically. Furthermore, some of them believe that assignments given by teachers might be a useful motivator for improving their intercultural listening skills. Under academic pressure, individuals must complete the specified duties to undertake associated activities, which will result in personal competence growth. This leads to a recommendation for 'culturally responsive teaching', which can be established to boost students' competence by cultivating human values and incorporating non-linguistic and extracurricular activities (Valeeva et al., 2020). Guo et al. (2022) emphasized the significance of a de-Westernization strategy, in which indigenous epistemology, language, and culture should be integrated into the teaching curriculum. This sheds light on the curriculum development for EFL students, in which learning materials are available for cultural acquisition, and various assignments are given to foster their practical learning and contrast cultural values.

Finally, all participants in this study believe that there is a close relationship between intercultural listening and listening abilities. Most participants interviewed consider that intercultural listening is an extension of listening ability. Through listening competence, an individual's language knowledge can be remarkably improved, such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc. so they can perform quite well on various language tests. However, with intercultural listening, EFL students can not only understand the literal meanings of communicated texts but also denote the meanings of the (intercultural) contexts. In other words, misunderstandings due to listening can be mitigated owing to improved intercultural listening competence. Some senior EFL students assert that intercultural listening is not

merely about listening to what is stated, but cultural knowledge, attitude, and skills should be involved to achieve mutual understanding among interlocutors.

The fact that EFL students have a high level of intercultural listening and listening strategies in the survey whereas they give their competencies at the medium levels should also be considered. That may reveal the curriculum, to some extent, introduces related topics but might not yet be at an intensive level to boost their ability. Hence, the present study suggests there should be academic instructions given by ELT teachers on how to stimulate intercultural listening so that students can actively self-practice to improve and enrich their attitudes, knowledge, and skills.

Conclusion

This study investigated EFL students' intercultural listening and their perspectives on the topic at a public higher education institution in Hanoi, Vietnam. The study's quantitative findings demonstrate a high degree of intercultural listening among EFL students and a positive relationship with their listening strategies. However, qualitative results reveal that EFL students propose a medium level of intercultural listening mostly owing to a lack of knowledge in intercultural listening and cultural background. Upon their perceptions of the importance of intercultural listening, EFL students adopt a variety of techniques to improve their proficiency.

The findings of the present study show the programs delivered to EFL students have been effective since EFL students have been acquiring intercultural listening through their second language learning process, resulting in their high level of competence. Nevertheless, the fact that EFL students are unfamiliar with intercultural listening until their participation in the study should be a concern. The main findings of the study are supposed to be useful to the university's managers because the principle of the training program with the inclusion of intercultural communication and intercultural listening can help produce highly qualified graduates for society, especially in the globalization context. Furthermore, the findings are allegedly helpful to the department's leaders in the design of the culturally responsive curriculum purposefully dedicated to boosting EFL students' intercultural listening. Finally, the present study hopes to increase EFL students' enthusiasm to acquire and strategize their learning process to foster intercultural listening (besides linguistic backgrounds), enabling them to become intercultural interactants in the new era. More studies on these with the employment of other data collecting techniques (e.g. class observation, interview with ELT teachers) and the correlation with intercultural communication may yield further meaningful findings to the literature.

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