

## EFL Students' Perceptions of Difficulties in Listening Section For TOEFL

Gabrilía M. Paath<sup>1\*</sup>, Noldy Pelenkahu<sup>2</sup>, Ignatius J. C. Tuerah<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Negeri Manado, Tondano, Indonesia  
Email: [gabbypaath@gmail.com](mailto:gabbypaath@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Negeri Manado, Tondano, Indonesia  
Email: [noldypelenkahu@unima.ac.id](mailto:noldypelenkahu@unima.ac.id)

<sup>3</sup>Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Negeri Manado, Tondano, Indonesia  
Email: [javiertuerah@unima.ac.id](mailto:javiertuerah@unima.ac.id)

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of the research is to reveal students' perception of difficulties in listening section for TOEFL by students of English Education Department UNIMA. This research used descriptive quantitative research. The techniques of collecting the data were questionnaire. The sample was 21-eighth semester students English Education Department UNIMA. The research finding showed that there are three types of difficulties faced by students. They are related with the material, related with the listener, and related with the physical setting. Bored and fatigue with long spoken text is difficulty that is most faced for the material because it has the percentage 90.5%. Difficult in the listening test because of the unclear of pronunciation is most faced by the students for the listener factor with the percentage 81%. Difficult to answer because of the bad quality of recording and difficult to concentrate if there are noises around the room of the listening test are most faced for the physical setting with the percentage 90.5%. Considering the result of this study, the students should be more active in practicing and need to train their listening at home intensively. English lecturers were suggested can decide which teaching strategies can be used to help the students improving their listening skills and can help them to overcome their problem in learning listening.

\*Corresponding Author:

Gabrilía M. Paath  
Universitas Negeri Manado  
Email: [gabbypaath@gmail.com](mailto:gabbypaath@gmail.com)

### INTRODUCTION

Listening is a skill that must be mastered by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. According to Putri & Serambi, (2019) "Listening is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying". Learning English is very complex

because in this language have four abilities, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing and with three additional abilities, namely vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. All these aspects are important and must be learned to well mastering English (Rorimpandey, 2019).

Listening plays an important role in communication as it is said that, of the total time spent on communicating, listening takes up 40-50%; speaking, 25-30%; reading, 11-16%; and writing, about 9% (Liando et al., 2018). Listening is the most frequently used language skill in the classroom (Afriyuninda & Oktaviani, 2021; Putri et al., 2018; Lengkoan, 2017). In listening, people have to give their attention and try to get meaning from something that they hear. If they get the meaning means that they can give their opinion through oral or written (Lengkoan et al., 2022a). Enhance your listening skills is also very important because it can be used in everyday life and will help us to improve our speaking skills. If someone wants to be fluent in English or want to communicate properly, they need to hear English repeatedly and continuously. According to Lumentut & Lengkoan, (2021); Maru et al., (2020); Hampp et al., (2021) language is a tool for expressing yourself, a communication tool, and a means for social control. As an input skill, listening plays a crucial role in students' language development. It means that without listening, people cannot obtain language because listening provides the language input. Lengkoan, (2017) said "If we understand that effective listening is acquired and not inherited,

We may seek to acquire certain specific techniques that offer improvement. Therefore, teaching listening needs to be given more attention to developing students' language (Lestary, 2019). In some cases of language classes, listening is considered the most difficult language skill for EFL learners because it requires more attention and concentration to understand the material. Most teachers take it for granted and believe that it will develop naturally in the language learning process. Arono et al., (2022) stated that one of the reasons for the opinion that listening is a skill that tends to be neglected is the feeling among language teachers that this skill is automatically acquired by the learner as he learns to speak the language. Lecturers have the ability to handle students and classroom conditions. It is the responsibility of the lecturer to solve the difficulties faced by students. Teachers should have a teaching variation in their teaching to make teaching-learning English more fun (Liando et al., 2022; Lengkoan & Rombepajung, 2022; Andries et al., 2019).

Listening also affects the TOEFL test. According to Waluyo & Rofiah, (2021) and Hampp et al., (2021) TOEFL is a standardized test which is designed to measure the English language ability of non-native speakers to enroll in Universities of America. The TOEFL score have been used as the requirements for non-native applicants in American and English speaker colleagues and universities, to obtain scholarship in those countries. The admission committees of more than 8.500

colleagues and universities in the United States, Canada, Australia and 130 other countries worldwide request foreign applicants to submit TOEFL score along with transcript and recommendations in order to be considered as admission (Darasawang & Reinders, 2021). It is particularly used by some institutions and universities in Indonesia recently as the one of requirements to get a job or get scholar also to continue the study in other countries as well. It will be beneficial for them when they have the TOEFL certificate first.

Most of the universities in Indonesia apply TOEFL test as one of students' requirements before graduation. Each university has different standard score as the requirement for graduation (Lengkoan et al., 2022). Some universities use TOEFL test to measure students' skills in English. Not a few EFL learners, especially students who want to finish their degree get a low score in the listening section because of a lack of listening skills. For example, the students in the Education Department of Manado State University are required to take the TOEFL test to get a degree, and some students stated that they had difficulties in doing listening section.

Based on the explanation above, the writer chose English Education Department of UNIMA as place of case study research. The researcher interested in researching this case in term of students' perceptions of difficulties in listening section for TOEFL by students of English Education Department UNIMA.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### ***Perception***

Perception is started from the sense of organ. This process is related to the acceptance of message or information by human brain. In this process, a person interact with his/her environments using five senses. Those are vision, hearing, taste, smell, and touch (Maru et al., 2022). People interact with the environment using these senses, then the stimuli will be registered by brain and send them to nervous system. Furthermore, this process is called as sensation, and sensation is a part of perception. (Liando et al., 2021) explained that perception is the realization of human brain process and it appears as a view about phenomenon. In this process, many factors such as feeling, needs, motivation, educational background, experiences, etc are involved. Then the process is followed by a process which a person's brain arrives at meaningful interpretation of stimuli.

### ***Listening***

According to Baills et al., (2021), "Listening is listening (paying attention) to what people say or read." There are many definitions of listening by many researchers. Chon & Shin, (2019) stated that "Listening is a process of listening to oral symbols with full attention, understanding, appreciation, and interpretation to obtain information, capture content, and understand the meaning of communication

that is not conveyed by the speaker through exams or oral language." According to Afriyuninda & Oktaviani, (2021), listening as the ability to understand native speech at normal speed. Liu & Liu, (2019) defined listening as a process of understanding what is heard and organizing it into lexical elements to which meaning can be allocated. Lengkoan, (2017) mention that listening helps us to understand the world around us and is one of the necessary elements in creating successful communication.

### *TOEFL (Test of English As a Foreign Language)*

The Test of English As a Foreign Language (TOEFL), is a test conducted by institutions Educational Testing Service (ETS) in the United States. The TOEFL test is a test to measure the level of English proficiency of nonnative speakers of English (Hampp et al., 2021). It is probably the most often used examination in the admissions process of foreign students to colleges and universities. However, these schools often do not consider the student's grades in schools which he or she previously attended and the records from any intensive English program in which the student was enrolled. All this depends on the schools admission criteria. The score is acceptable to given school also depends on the regulation for that particular school.

Since 1960s, TOEFL have been used to assess the English proficiency of second language speakers of English who want to study in institution where English is the language of instruction (Lengkoan et al., 2022). TOEFL test was commissioned under the auspices of the National Council on the testing of English as foreign language. TOEFL testing program was initially financed by grants from the Ford and Danforth Foundations and was attached administratively to the modern language. In 1965, the College Board and ETS assumed join responsibility for the testing program. According to ETS (Educational Testing Service), since the first TOEFL test was launched more than 27 million people from around the world have signed up to take the test.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The research design used in this research is descriptive qualitative research. Marshall & Rossman, (1999) stated that descriptive research is conducted to give detail image about phenomenon. Descriptive research involves gathering data that describe events and then organizes, tabulates, depicts, and describes the data

collection (Creswell, 1998). The population of this research is the 8<sup>th</sup> semester students class A, B, and C of the English Education Department at UNIMA.

In this research the researcher used random sampling technique. The total samples that have been used are 21 students. The subject of this research is the 8<sup>th</sup> semester students class A, B, and C of the English Education Department UNIMA. The researcher took 7 students of each class. This research conducted by using questionnaire to collect the data. The questionnaire about three factors influence the students on listening which are listening material, listener factor, and physical setting. The questionnaire includes open-ended and close-ended questions. The questionnaire is about the students' perceptions of difficulties in listening section for TOEFL by students of English Education Department UNIMA. The scoring technique that used in this research questionnaire is the Likert scale technique.

The questionnaire has been made in Google form. The researchers distribute the questionnaire to 8<sup>th</sup> semester students class A, B, and C of the English Education Department UNIMA as representative of the research. The link has been delivered to the students personally by using WhatsApps.

After the students answer the questionnaire, the data are analyzed by formula form (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The researchers calculate the percentage of each number of statements of the questionnaire. After finishing the data calculation of the questionnaire, the researchers describe and put conclusion of each statement.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### *Findings*

The study of EFL students' perceptions regarding difficulties in the listening section of the TOEFL test reveals critical insights into the challenges faced by learners in mastering listening comprehension. Listening, a vital component of language proficiency, often presents obstacles for non-native speakers due to factors such as the speed of spoken language, unfamiliar accents, and the complexity of the content. These issues are compounded when students are required to understand nuanced information and distinguish between similar-sounding words or phrases in a timed setting. Understanding these perceptions is essential for educators and curriculum developers, as it provides a foundation for developing targeted strategies to improve students' listening skills and overall performance in TOEFL.

One significant finding is that many students perceive the pace of speech in the TOEFL listening section as too rapid, making it difficult to follow and

comprehend the material. This challenge is often exacerbated by the use of different accents, which can further hinder understanding, especially for students who are accustomed to only one variety of English. Additionally, the complexity of vocabulary and idiomatic expressions used in the listening passages adds another layer of difficulty (Maru et al., 2022). These factors can lead to students missing key information, which negatively impacts their ability to answer questions accurately.

Another critical aspect revealed in the study is the impact of test anxiety on listening performance. Many students report feeling overwhelmed by the pressure to perform well, which can impair their ability to concentrate and process the information they hear. This anxiety is often heightened by the fear of missing out on parts of the audio, knowing that the listening section allows for only one playback (Maru et al., 2021). Consequently, students may struggle to maintain focus, leading to mistakes and lower scores. These findings underscore the importance of not only teaching listening strategies but also addressing the psychological factors that influence test performance, in order to better prepare students for the TOEFL listening section.

***Statement 1. I feel difficult with the unfamiliar word including jargon and idiom***

Statements	Never (N)	Seldom (S)	Sometimes (S)	Often (O)	Always (A)
1	0	4	12	3	2
2	1	5	7	8	0
3	5	7	9	0	0
4	2	7	10	2	0
5	2	5	8	6	0
6	1	1	7	10	2
7	1	4	10	5	1
8	1	4	12	3	1
9	1	8	8	4	0
10	1	8	9	3	0
11	4	8	5	3	1
12	1	7	5	4	4
13	1	3	5	10	2
14	3	7	6	4	1
15	4	5	8	3	1

16	0	5	7	9	0
17	2	4	14	1	0
18	1	4	7	7	2
19	2	6	8	4	1
20	1	4	10	5	1
21	3	4	6	7	1
22	2	5	7	5	2
23	2	5	8	6	0
24	7	6	7	1	0
25	0	2	5	7	7
26	1	4	11	4	1
27	0	3	3	13	2
28	0	5	11	5	0
29	0	2	1	8	10
30	1	2	4	3	11

From the statement showed that the difficult with unfamiliar word including jargon and idiom with 9.5% always, 14.3% often, 19% seldom, and 57% sometimes. Vocabulary deficiency is one cause difficulties in listening faced by students. Students should further improve their vocabulary if they want to overcome the difficulties with foreign words.

*Statement 2. I feel difficult because of the lack on my grammar.* The difficult because of the lack on grammar with 23% seldom, 33.3% sometimes, and 38.1% often. Many of them have difficulties to listen complex sentence because of the lack on grammar skills.

*Statement 3. I feel difficult to understand every single word in the spoken text.* Respondents' responses showed in the statement above conveyed that 23.8% never, 33.3% seldom and 42.9% sometimes have difficulty to understand every single word in spoken text. This is an appreciable result, seeing that there are more than 20% do not find it difficult.

*Statement 4. I feel difficult with the same word in pronouncing but they have different meaning.* It showed that 47.6% sometimes, 33.3% seldom, 9.5% often and 9.5% never have difficulty with the same word in pronouncing but have different of meaning. There are many students who are difficult to distinguish words in the same pronounce.

*Statement 5. I feel difficult to interpret the meaning of the spoken text.* From the statement, it showed that 38.1% sometimes, 28.6% often, 23.8% seldom, and 9.5% never have difficulty to interpret the meaning of spoken text. Based on the research finding, almost half of students have this problem because of their lack of vocabulary. This is important skill because the students can't find the answer if they are difficult to interpret the meaning of spoken text.

*Statement 6. I feel fatigue and bored when I listen with long spoken text.* It showed that 47.% often, 33.3% sometimes, and 9.5% always feel fatigue and bored when I listen with long spoken text probably because they have to understand the unfamiliar sounds, lexis, and syntax in a long of spoken text.

*Statement 7. I feel difficult with the unfamiliar topic.* Based on the result, the difficult with unfamiliar topic 47.6% sometimes, 23.8% often, and 19% seldom. It happens because the students rarely read about that topic so that students have to improve their knowledge with reading and listening a lot.

*Statement 8. I feel difficult to use a reduced form.* Respondents' responses showed in the diagram above conveyed that 57% sometimes, 19% seldom, and 14.3% often feel difficult to use a reduced form. Much of students face this problem because they have lack about grammar structure.

*Statement 9. I feel difficult with a long conversation.* It showed 38% sometimes, 38.1% seldom and 19% often have difficulty with a long conversation. It means that long conversation is students' difficulty in listening comprehension because most of students have problem with a long conversation.

*Statement 10. I feel difficult to find the synonym of word.* The obtain result from students' responses on diagram above, showed that 42.9% sometimes, 38.1% seldom and 14.3% often feel difficult to find the synonym of the word in the listening comprehension. Students need to increase their vocabulary to overcome this difficulty.

*Statement 11. I feel afraid in the listening test because of the lack of confidence.* It showed that 38% seldom, 23.8% sometimes and 19% never feel afraid in the listening test because of the lack of confidence. This result is very good because self-confidence is one of the important things that have an impact on answering questions during listening test.

*Statement 12. I am worried if I don't understand the spoken text.* It showed that 33.3% seldom, 23.8% sometimes, 19% often and 19% always worried if they don't understand the spoken text. Many of students face this problem because they feel afraid if they can't answer the questions correctly.



*Statement 13. I feel difficult in the listening test because of the unclear of pronunciation.* The result showed that 47.6% often, 23.8% sometimes, 14.3% seldom, and 9.5% always feel difficult in the listening test because of the unclear of pronunciation. Based on the results above, it is unfortunate that this is a high result considering unclear pronunciation greatly affects students in listening comprehension. Unclear pronunciation of the speaker will influence the students to understand the spoken text.

*Statement 14. I feel difficult because I don't pay attention with the information of speaker.* It showed that 33.3% seldom, 28.6% sometimes, 19% often and 14.3% always feel difficult because they do not pay attention with the information of speaker. Students need to pay attention to the speakers' if they want to understand the spoken text.

*Statement 15. I lose my focus when I get an expected answer.* Respondents' responses showed in the diagram above conveyed that 38.1% sometimes, 23.8% seldom, 14.3% often and 19% never losing focus when students get an expected answer. From the result, many of students have a problem with this part because they will focus with the answer when they find the correct answer.

*Statement 16. I feel difficult in listening when I find the unknown words.* showed that 42.9% often, 33.3% sometimes, and 23.8% seldom have difficulty in listening when they find the unknown words. From the percentage, most of students have a problem with the unknown words because they will try to understand all the spoken text. Students will easily find the meaning of word when they find the unknown words.

*Statement 17. I feel in a problem to infer the meaning from the spoken text.* It showed that 66.7% sometimes, 19% seldom and 9.5% never feel difficult to infer the meaning from the spoken text. Many of students still have this problem because they are lack of knowledge about listening and they limit of English vocabulary.

*Statement 18. I feel unable to concentrate when I answer and listen at the same time.* The obtain result from the statement above showed that 33.3% often, 33.3% sometimes, 19% seldom and 9.5% always unable to concentrate when answer and listen at the same time. It showed that many of students have a problem with this part because the time is limit in the listening comprehension.

*Statement 19. I lose my concentration when I hear a new word in the listening test.* Respondents' responses showed that 38.1% sometimes, 28.6% seldom, 19% often and 9.5% never losing concentration when hear a new word in the listening text.

Students need to learn about the strategy on listening so that they will be able to keep concentration.

*Statement 20. I can't identify the word because of the way of speaker pronounces.* It showed that 47.6% sometimes, 23.8% often and 19% seldom have difficulty to identify the word because of the way of speaker pronounces. It can be seen that the difference of culture influences the students' ability in listening comprehension.

*Statement 21. I feel difficult to quickly remember about the word that I just heard.* It showed that 33.3% often, 28.6% never 19% seldom and 14.3% never have difficulty to quickly remember about the word that just heard. The situation in the room that distracts students also has an effect on this.

*Statement 22. I feel difficult to answer if the question has long of answer.* The result showed that 33.3% sometimes, 23.8% often, 23.8% seldom, 9.5% always and 9.5% never have difficulty to answer if the question has long of answer.

*Statement 23. I feel difficult when I listen without the script.* It showed that 38.1% sometimes, 28.6% often, 23.8% seldom and 9.5% never feel difficult when listen without script. Many students have a problem with this part because of the lack of practice. They need more practice to listen without the script if they want to overcome this difficulty.

*Statement 24. I feel difficult to hear the spoken text because I have a problem with my hearing.* It showed that 28.6% seldom, 33.3% sometimes and 33.3% never have difficulty to hear the spoken text because a problem with hearing. It will be better if students with a problem of hearing to take the seat in front of the room or close to the speaker.

*Statement 25. I feel difficult to answer because of the bad quality of recording.* Respondents' responses showed that 9.5% seldom, 23.8% sometimes, 33.3% often and 33.3% always difficult to answer because of the bad quality of recording. The percentages of this problem are high so that it is one of main problem that is faced by the students. The bad quality of recording will influence the students to get a high score on the listening comprehension.

*Statement 26. I feel difficult to understand the spoken text because of the variety accents of the speaker.* It showed that 52.4% sometimes, 19% seldom and 19% often have difficulty to understand the spoken text because of the variety accents of the speaker. Students still confuse with British and American English because they have a different in the pronunciation and intonation.

*Statement 27. I feel difficult to understand if the speaker speaks too fast.* Respondents' responses showed that 61.9% often, 14.3% sometimes, 14.3% seldom

and 9.5% always difficult to understand if the speaker speaks too fast. It is one of main problem that is faced by students. Students have to practice and get used to listening to native speakers to overcome this difficulty.

*Statement 28. I feel difficult to understand the spoken text if I can't get repeated.* It showed that 52.4% sometimes, 23.8% seldom and 23.8% seldom have difficulty to understand the spoken text if I can't get repeated. Students need to listen more than one time so that they can understand the spoken text. They have to practice so that they are accustomed to understanding what is heard without having to be repeated.

*Statement 29. I feel difficult to concentrate if there are noises around the room of the listening text.* It showed that 47.6% always, 38.1% often and 9.5% seldom. It was clear that the majority of the respondents always difficult to concentrate if there are noises around the room of the listening text. Most of student can't concentrate if the room of the test has noises from the outside.

*Statement 30. I feel difficult to understand because of the bad quality of the loudspeaker or the earphone that is used.* The result showed that 52.4% always, 14.3% often and 9.5% seldom have difficulty to understand because of the bad quality of the loudspeaker or the earphone that is used. Based on the percentage, it is one of main problem that is faced by students because it has high of percentages. The bad quality of equipment makes the sound of the speaker unclear and difficult to understand. The results of the questionnaire above include three factors influence the students on listening which are listening material, listener factor, and physical setting.

The first factor related to the listening material, consist of ten difficulties. They are about jargon and idiom, grammar, homophone, unfamiliar topic, etc. Based on the research finding, bored and fatigue with long spoken text and unfamiliar word are the most difficulties related to the listening material faced by the students with percentage 90.5% for bored and fatigue with long spoken text and 80.5% unfamiliar word including jargon and idiom.

The second factor related to the listener, consist of fourteen difficulties. They are about lack of confidence, don't pay attention with the intonation, lose focus, lose concentration when hear a new word, etc. In this part, the unclear of pronunciation is one kind of difficulty that is most faced by students with the percentage 81%.

The third factor related to the physical setting, consist of six difficulties. They are about bad quality of recording, the variety accents, can't get a repeat, noise around the room, etc. In contrast to earlier, many students have difficulty in this factor where 90.5% difficult to answer because of the bad quality of recording, 85.7% difficult to understand if the speaker speaks too fast, 90.5% difficult to concentrate if

there are noises around the room of the listening test and 85.7% difficult to understand because of the bad quality of the loudspeaker or the earphone that is used.

### *Discussion*

In analyzing the findings from the survey statements related to the difficulties EFL students face in the listening section of the TOEFL, several recurring themes emerge that shed light on the challenges these students encounter. The data from the survey statements provides insight into various aspects of listening comprehension that students struggle with, ranging from linguistic issues such as grammar and vocabulary to external factors like sound quality and test conditions. Understanding these specific difficulties is essential for educators and students alike, as it can guide the development of more effective teaching strategies and study practices.

Statement 2: The difficulty arising from a lack of grammar skills is highlighted by the responses, where 23% of students indicated they seldom experience this difficulty, 33.3% sometimes, and 38.1% often struggle due to poor grammar. This suggests that a significant portion of students finds their grammar deficiencies impede their ability to comprehend complex sentences in spoken texts. Grammar serves as the foundation for understanding sentence structure and meaning, and a lack of it can lead to confusion, especially when dealing with intricate or compound sentences that are common in TOEFL listening passages. For instance, understanding the difference between a subordinate clause and a main clause or identifying verb tenses and their implications for meaning can be challenging without solid grammatical knowledge. This deficiency can cause students to miss crucial information or misinterpret the speaker's intent, leading to incorrect answers.

Statement 3: The challenge of understanding every single word in spoken text is another area of concern, with 23.8% of respondents never finding this difficult, 33.3% seldom, and 42.9% sometimes experiencing difficulty. While it is promising that more than 20% of students do not find this task challenging, the fact that nearly half struggle to some extent is significant. The ability to grasp every word in a listening passage is crucial for ensuring that no key details are missed. However, this task is complicated by the natural flow of speech, where words may be slurred, spoken rapidly, or connected in a way that is unfamiliar to non-native speakers. Additionally, the use of colloquial expressions or idioms, which may not have direct

translations in the students' native language, can add to the difficulty. This challenge points to the need for more exposure to authentic spoken English and practice in deciphering meaning from context, rather than relying solely on understanding each word individually.

Statement 4: The issue of words that sound the same but have different meanings presents another obstacle, with 47.6% of students sometimes, 33.3% seldom, 9.5% often, and 9.5% never struggling with this. Homophones and words with similar pronunciation but different meanings can easily confuse students, especially in a listening test where visual cues are absent. This problem is exacerbated when these words are used in rapid succession or within complex sentences, where the context may not be immediately clear. For instance, words like "right" (correct) and "write" (to inscribe) can be difficult to differentiate without clear contextual clues. This difficulty indicates that students need more practice in contextually interpreting spoken words and increasing their awareness of common homophones in English.

Statement 5: The challenge of interpreting the meaning of spoken text is a significant hurdle, with 38.1% of students sometimes, 28.6% often, 23.8% seldom, and 9.5% never facing this issue. The ability to interpret spoken text goes beyond merely understanding individual words; it requires comprehension of the overall message, tone, and intent of the speaker. This skill is particularly crucial in the TOEFL, where questions often test the ability to infer meaning, identify the speaker's purpose, or understand the implied meanings behind statements. A lack of vocabulary, as indicated by the survey, likely contributes to this difficulty, as students may not have the necessary lexical resources to fully grasp the nuances of spoken English. This underscores the importance of building a robust vocabulary and practicing active listening strategies that focus on understanding implied meaning and the speaker's intent.

Statement 6: Fatigue and boredom from listening to long spoken texts are issues for 47% of students who often experience this, 33.3% sometimes, and 9.5% always. Long listening passages can be mentally taxing, especially when students are required to maintain concentration and comprehension over an extended period. This fatigue is often due to the unfamiliarity with the sounds, vocabulary, and syntax of English, making it difficult for students to stay engaged and retain information. The length of the text increases the cognitive load, leading to a decline in performance as students may struggle to keep track of the information presented. This finding suggests that students need to develop better stamina for listening

tasks, possibly through regular practice with lengthy audio materials and exercises designed to improve their concentration and retention skills.

Statement 7: Difficulties with unfamiliar topics are reported by 47.6% of students who sometimes struggle with this, 23.8% often, and 19% seldom. Encountering topics that are outside a student's knowledge base can make comprehension challenging, as students may lack the background knowledge necessary to make sense of the context or content of the spoken text. This issue is compounded by the fact that TOEFL listening passages often cover a wide range of subjects, including academic lectures, conversations, and news reports, which may be unfamiliar to the students. This challenge highlights the importance of broadening students' exposure to diverse topics and improving their ability to quickly grasp the gist of unfamiliar material through contextual clues and general knowledge.

Statement 8: The use of reduced forms in spoken English is another area where students struggle, with 57% sometimes, 19% seldom, and 14.3% often finding it difficult. Reduced forms, such as contractions (e.g., "gonna" for "going to") and elided sounds (e.g., "wanna" for "want to"), are common in natural spoken English but can be confusing for non-native speakers who are more accustomed to the full forms of words and phrases. This difficulty suggests that students need more exposure to natural spoken English and practice in recognizing and interpreting these reduced forms. Understanding reduced forms is crucial for achieving fluency in listening comprehension, as these are frequently used in casual conversations and real-life speech situations.

Statement 9: The challenge of following long conversations is reported by 38% of students who sometimes, 38.1% seldom, and 19% often face this difficulty. Long conversations require sustained attention and the ability to track multiple ideas, perspectives, and speakers. For students who are not yet fully comfortable with English, maintaining focus and comprehension over the course of a lengthy dialogue can be daunting. This challenge may also be due to the students' limited experience with extended conversations in English, as many EFL learners are more familiar with shorter, more structured interactions. To overcome this difficulty, students would benefit from engaging in more extensive listening practice, including exposure to longer dialogues and discussions, as well as exercises designed to improve their ability to summarize and retain information from extended listening passages.

Statement 10: highlights that a notable portion of students struggles with finding synonyms for words during listening comprehension, with 42.9% of students sometimes finding it difficult, 38.1% seldom, and 14.3% often facing this challenge. Synonym recognition is a critical skill in TOEFL listening tasks, as questions often require students to understand a word or phrase's meaning in context, even when it is rephrased or paraphrased. This difficulty suggests that students may have a limited vocabulary range or lack the necessary exposure to varied language use. To overcome this challenge, students need to expand their vocabulary through consistent reading and listening practice across different genres and contexts. Engaging with diverse materials, such as news articles, podcasts, and academic lectures, can expose students to synonyms and related vocabulary, helping them become more adept at recognizing alternative expressions of the same idea.

Statement 11: addresses the issue of confidence during listening tests, where 38% of students report seldom feeling afraid, 23.8% sometimes, and 19% never experience fear due to a lack of confidence. The relatively high percentage of students who seldom or never feel afraid is encouraging, as confidence plays a vital role in listening comprehension. When students believe in their ability to understand spoken English, they are more likely to remain focused, manage their anxiety, and perform better on the test. However, the presence of any fear or lack of confidence, even at moderate levels, can still be detrimental. This fear may stem from past experiences of difficulty in understanding spoken English, leading to a cycle of anxiety and reduced performance. To build confidence, students can benefit from regular exposure to listening practice in a low-stakes environment, where they can gradually build their skills without the pressure of testing conditions. Additionally, familiarizing themselves with the test format and practicing under simulated conditions can help reduce anxiety and build confidence.

Statement 12: explores the worry students feel when they do not understand the spoken text, with 33.3% seldom, 23.8% sometimes, 19% often, and 19% always experiencing this concern. This worry can significantly impact a student's ability to concentrate and perform well in the listening test. When students become preoccupied with the fear of not understanding, they may lose focus, miss key information, or even panic, leading to a downward spiral in their performance. This concern often arises from a lack of familiarity with the test content or a perceived gap in language skills. To address this issue, students need to develop strategies for dealing with difficult passages, such as focusing on catching the main ideas, using

context to infer meaning, and not getting stuck on unfamiliar words. Teachers can also play a role by offering guidance on test-taking strategies, such as active listening techniques and methods for staying calm and focused under pressure.

Statement 13: discusses the difficulty of understanding spoken text due to unclear pronunciation, with 47.6% of students often facing this issue, 23.8% sometimes, 14.3% seldom, and 9.5% always struggling with it. Unclear pronunciation is a significant barrier to effective listening comprehension, particularly for non-native speakers who may not be accustomed to the various accents and speaking styles they encounter in the TOEFL listening section. This issue is compounded by the fact that natural speech often includes features such as connected speech, reductions, and variations in intonation that can obscure individual word boundaries and meanings. The high percentage of students struggling with unclear pronunciation indicates a need for more targeted practice in this area. Listening exercises that expose students to different accents, as well as training in phonological awareness and the recognition of reduced forms, can help improve their ability to understand spoken English. Additionally, repeated exposure to authentic listening materials, such as recorded conversations, lectures, and media broadcasts, can help students become more attuned to different pronunciations and speaking styles.

Statement 14: indicates that 33.3% of students seldom pay attention to the speaker's information, 28.6% sometimes do, 19% often, and 14.3% always find it difficult to focus on the information provided by the speaker. This lack of attention can significantly impact comprehension, as understanding spoken text requires active listening. Active listening involves not just hearing the words but also interpreting and retaining the information. The challenge here may stem from various factors, such as unfamiliarity with the topic, difficulty in maintaining interest, or simply not knowing effective listening strategies. To address this, students need to practice active listening techniques, such as note-taking, summarizing, and predicting content, which can help them stay engaged and better process the information being presented.

Statement 15: reveals that 38.1% of students sometimes lose focus when they get an expected answer, 23.8% seldom do, 14.3% often, and 19% never lose focus. This issue occurs because students tend to relax or let their guard down once they hear an answer they anticipate, leading to a lapse in attention and potentially missing subsequent information. This tendency to lose focus can be detrimental in a test setting where every detail matters. To combat this, students need to develop the



discipline to maintain concentration throughout the listening passage. Techniques such as mentally rehearsing possible answers, continually asking questions about the content, and staying aware that the test often includes distractors or requires nuanced understanding can help students maintain their focus.

Statement 16: discusses the difficulty students experience when encountering unknown words during listening, with 42.9% often struggling, 33.3% sometimes, and 23.8% seldom. Unknown vocabulary is a common hurdle in language learning, and encountering unfamiliar words can disrupt comprehension, as students may become fixated on trying to understand these words, thus missing out on the overall meaning of the passage. This challenge suggests that students may lack strategies for dealing with unknown vocabulary, such as inferring meaning from context or recognizing that it may not be necessary to understand every word to grasp the main idea. To overcome this, students should be trained in vocabulary-building exercises and context-clue strategies, and they should practice listening to a wide range of materials where they can learn to tolerate ambiguity and focus on understanding the gist rather than every detail.

Statement 17: highlights the difficulty of inferring meaning from spoken text, with 66.7% of students sometimes facing this issue, 19% seldom, and 9.5% never experiencing it. Inferring meaning requires not only a good command of vocabulary but also the ability to understand the context, tone, and nuances of the language. This skill is crucial for answering inference questions, which are common in the TOEFL listening section. The difficulty here could stem from a lack of exposure to authentic listening materials or insufficient practice in making inferences in English. To improve, students should engage with listening materials that challenge them to think critically and make inferences, such as news reports, academic lectures, and discussions. Additionally, teachers can provide explicit instruction on how to infer meaning by using contextual clues, background knowledge, and logical reasoning.

Statement 18: reveals that students struggle with concentrating when they have to listen and answer questions simultaneously, with 33.3% often experiencing this difficulty, 33.3% sometimes, 19% seldom, and 9.5% always. This issue is particularly challenging in timed tests like the TOEFL, where students must manage their time effectively while processing information in real-time. The ability to multitask in this manner requires not only language proficiency but also test-taking strategies and practice. Students need to develop the skill of jotting down key points quickly, understanding questions swiftly, and making decisions under time pressure. Practice tests under timed conditions can help students become more

accustomed to the demands of the listening section and improve their ability to concentrate and manage tasks simultaneously.

Statement 19: indicates that 38.1% of students sometimes lose concentration when they hear a new word during the listening test, 28.6% seldom, 19% often, and 9.5% never experience this issue. The introduction of new or unfamiliar vocabulary can be jarring, leading students to focus too much on trying to understand the word and consequently losing track of the overall content. This challenge highlights the need for students to be comfortable with ambiguity and to develop strategies for staying focused even when they encounter difficult or unfamiliar language. Strategies such as recognizing and ignoring distractors, focusing on the overall message rather than specific words, and practicing with varied listening materials can help students maintain their concentration.

Statement 20: addresses the difficulty of identifying words due to the way a speaker pronounces them, with 47.6% of students sometimes struggling, 23.8% often, and 19% seldom. Pronunciation can vary widely due to factors such as accent, intonation, and speed, all of which can affect a listener's ability to identify words correctly. This issue is particularly relevant for non-native speakers who may not be accustomed to the wide range of English pronunciations. To mitigate this difficulty, students should be exposed to different English accents and pronunciations through diverse listening materials, such as international news broadcasts, podcasts, and videos. Additionally, practicing phonological awareness exercises and learning to recognize common pronunciation variations can help students improve their listening comprehension skills.

Statement 21: highlights the issue of memory retention, with 33.3% of students often struggling to quickly remember words they have just heard, 28.6% never facing this issue, 19% seldom, and 14.3% always encountering it. Memory retention in listening is crucial, as it allows students to recall key information and answer questions accurately. The inability to quickly remember words could be attributed to a lack of focused attention, insufficient practice, or even anxiety. This challenge can be exacerbated by distractions in the environment, such as noise or uncomfortable seating arrangements, which can hinder a student's ability to concentrate fully. To overcome this, students should engage in exercises that improve short-term memory and focus, such as practicing with short audio clips and immediately summarizing what they heard, and learning to manage distractions effectively.

Statement 22: discusses the difficulty students face when responding to questions that require lengthy answers, with 33.3% sometimes struggling, 23.8% often, 23.8% seldom, 9.5% always, and 9.5% never finding it difficult. Long answers require not only a good grasp of the material but also the ability to organize thoughts and articulate them clearly under time pressure. This challenge may stem from limited vocabulary, lack of practice in formulating extended responses, or anxiety about speaking or writing in English. To address this, students need to practice constructing and articulating longer answers, focusing on clarity and coherence. They should also work on building their vocabulary and familiarizing themselves with different types of questions that require detailed responses.

Statement 23: reveals that listening without a script poses a significant challenge for many students, with 38.1% sometimes finding it difficult, 28.6% often, 23.8% seldom, and 9.5% never struggling with this aspect. Listening without a script tests a student's ability to understand spoken language in real-time, without relying on visual cues or written text. The difficulty here often arises from a lack of exposure to authentic listening materials and insufficient practice in processing spoken English. To improve in this area, students should engage in listening activities that do not include scripts, such as listening to podcasts, watching videos, or attending lectures without relying on subtitles or transcripts. This will help them become more comfortable with understanding spoken English in its natural form.

Statement 24: touches on the physical aspect of listening comprehension – students' hearing abilities. It shows that 28.6% of students seldom, 33.3% sometimes, and 33.3% never have difficulty hearing the spoken text due to hearing problems. Hearing issues can significantly impact a student's performance in listening comprehension, especially if the audio is not clear or if the student is seated far from the speaker. For students with hearing difficulties, it's essential to take preventive measures, such as sitting closer to the audio source or requesting accommodations like better seating arrangements or the use of personal listening devices. Instructors and test administrators should also ensure that the audio quality is optimal and that students are aware of any available accommodations.

Statement 25: indicates that the bad quality of recordings is a significant problem, with 33.3% of students often and 33.3% always struggling to answer due to poor audio quality, while 23.8% sometimes and 9.5% seldom face this issue. Poor audio quality can distort words and make it difficult for students to understand the content, leading to frustration and a negative impact on their test performance. This issue highlights the importance of good technical support during listening tests. To

mitigate this problem, students should be provided with high-quality recordings for practice and tests. Moreover, test administrators should regularly check the audio equipment to ensure it's functioning correctly. Students can also prepare by practicing with various audio qualities to build resilience to potential audio issues during the test.

Statement 26: addresses the difficulty students face in understanding different accents, with 52.4% sometimes finding it challenging, 19% seldom, and 19% often experiencing this issue. Accents can significantly affect comprehension, as different accents may include variations in pronunciation, intonation, and even vocabulary. Many EFL students are more familiar with one accent, such as American or British English, and may struggle with understanding others. To overcome this challenge, students should expose themselves to a variety of English accents by listening to international media, such as news programs, movies, and interviews from different English-speaking countries. This exposure will help them become more adaptable and improve their ability to understand spoken English, regardless of the accent.

Statement 27: focuses on the challenge of understanding fast speech, with 61.9% of students often struggling when the speaker talks too quickly, 14.3% sometimes, 14.3% seldom, and 9.5% always finding it difficult. Fast speech can overwhelm students who are still developing their listening skills, as it requires rapid processing of information and the ability to keep up with the pace of spoken language. To address this issue, students need to practice listening to faster speech through various exercises, such as shadowing, where they repeat what they hear as quickly as possible, and using playback speed controls to gradually increase the speed of practice materials. Over time, this will help them become more accustomed to different speaking rates and improve their ability to understand fast-paced spoken text.

Statement 28: discusses the need for repetition in listening comprehension, with 52.4% of students sometimes, 23.8% seldom, and 23.8% often finding it difficult to understand spoken text without the opportunity to hear it again. Repetition can be a crucial aid in comprehension, allowing students to catch details they may have missed the first time. However, during standardized tests like the TOEFL, audio passages are typically played only once, which can be challenging for students who rely on repetition to understand content. To overcome this, students need to practice understanding spoken text on the first listen by engaging in exercises that simulate test conditions. Developing strategies such as focusing on keywords,

making quick notes, and summarizing main ideas can help students improve their ability to comprehend spoken text without the need for repetition.

Statement 29: reveals that external noises significantly disrupt students' concentration, with 47.6% always, 38.1% often, and 9.5% seldom struggling to concentrate when there is noise around the room. Environmental noise can be a major distraction, breaking students' focus and making it difficult for them to follow the listening material. This problem is especially prevalent in testing environments where external factors are beyond the student's control. To manage this, students can practice concentration techniques such as mindfulness and focused listening exercises in noisy environments to build their resilience to distractions. Additionally, test administrators should strive to create quiet and controlled environments for listening tests, minimizing potential disruptions from outside noise.

Statement 30: highlights the difficulty students face due to poor audio equipment quality, with 52.4% always, 14.3% often, and 9.5% seldom finding it hard to understand spoken text due to bad loudspeaker or earphone quality. Poor audio equipment can severely impact comprehension by distorting sound, making it difficult for students to catch every word or understand the passage clearly. This issue underscores the importance of using high-quality audio equipment in both test preparation and during the actual test. Students should also familiarize themselves with different types of audio equipment and practice using them to ensure they are comfortable and can maximize their performance, regardless of the quality of the equipment provided.

The difficulties outlined in Statements 1-13 and 14 to 20 provide a comprehensive overview of the challenges EFL students face in the listening section of the TOEFL. These challenges underscore the importance of developing a range of skills, including active listening, vocabulary management, inference, concentration, and pronunciation recognition. The challenges outlined in Statements 21 to 30 emphasize the multifaceted nature of listening comprehension difficulties faced by EFL students. These challenges, which include memory retention, response formulation, accent variation, fast speech, external noise, and audio quality, highlight the need for comprehensive preparation and targeted strategies. By addressing these issues through focused practice, strategic preparation, and ensuring optimal testing conditions, students can enhance their listening skills and improve their performance on the TOEFL listening section.

The survey findings reveal a range of difficulties faced by EFL students in the TOEFL listening section, with linguistic challenges such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation being among the most common. External factors, such as the quality of the listening environment and the test conditions, also play a significant role in students' performance. Addressing these difficulties requires a multifaceted approach, including targeted practice in specific listening skills, increased exposure to authentic spoken English, and strategies for managing test anxiety and maintaining focus. By understanding and addressing these challenges, educators can better prepare students for success in the listening section of the TOEFL and help them build the confidence and competence needed for effective listening comprehension in academic and real-world contexts.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the data analyses, we can see what difficulties are most experienced by students based on the existing percentage results; 90.5% feeling fatigue and bored when listen with long spoken text, 90.5% difficult to answer because of the bad quality of recording, and 90.5% difficult to concentrate if there are noises around the room of the listening test. Here are also some difficulties that have a fairly high percentage with results above 80%; 80.5% difficult with the unfamiliar word including jargon and idiom with, 81% difficult in the listening test because of the unclear of pronunciation, 85.7% difficult to understand if the speaker speaks too fast, and 85.7% difficult to understand because of the bad quality of the loudspeaker or the earphone that is used. From these findings, it could be conclude that there are still many students who have difficulty regardless of how long they study English. Hence, the students should always study hard and practice more to improve their listening skills.

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