

Investigating The Vietnamese EFL Learners' Affective And Cognitive Attitudes Towards The IELTS Listening Test

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ABSTRACT

The sustainable societal development generates the growing demand of Vietnamese EFL learners who would like to study abroad and one of the most popular English language proficiency test to be eligible for overseas universities is the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Consequently, the focus of language systems has been emphasized within the context of teaching and learning English in Vietnam, particularly in foreign language centers in Vietnam. Of the four language skills, listening has been considered as the most widely used language skill which has drawn a lot of attention from many researchers due to its primary importance in second language acquisition and learning (Rubin, 1994). The time we spent on listening exceeds the time spent on speaking, reading, and writing. However, its great importance has just received recognition lately as a tool to facilitate learners' language learning (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). A number of studies have been conducted to examine the validity of the IELTS test along with figuring out the relationship between the IELTS practice courses and learners' performance (Ata, 2015). Nevertheless, few empirical studies on the Vietnamese EFL learners' attitudes towards the IELTS listening test were carried out. Therefore, this study is conducted for the purpose of filling the gap in the literature in the local context of teaching and learning the IELTS test in Vietnam. Thus, the research aims at examining the Vietnamese EFL learners' attitudes towards the areas of the test that learners have positive affection, their perceptions of challenges of taking the IELTS listening test.

Key words: IELTS listening test, students' attitudes, challenges

INTRODUCTION

Background to the problem

The IELTS listening test

According to (Moore, 2005), due to the growing number of universities require IELTS as a requirement for students and a large number of students who wish to study in English-speaking countries, the expansion of IELTS is apparently inevitable. Many universities, colleges require that their students have to sit for the IELTS test prior to graduation. Therefore, the need for learning the IELTS test is increasing. IELTS encompasses two modules: general and academic training. Four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing are included in the IELTS test. A number of Vietnamese EFL learners took the IELTS test but they could not achieve an appropriate band score. There is little doubt that one of the reasons causing challenges for learners in the test is listening which exerts a tremendous impact on their performances. That is to say listening section of the IELTS test makes a substantial contribution to learners' success. Since listening may be the most challenging skill in language

learning, numerous studies should be undertaken to examine it in many aspects. Of various categories, attitudes are of paramount importance since it is believed that learners' success or failure in language learning is heavily influenced by their attitudes.

Attitudes

A lot of attention has been focused on attitudes proposed by social psychologists. However, Murray (2012) asserted that learners' attitudes towards a language test did not receive much attention from researchers and scholars in language learning. It is widely accepted that attitudes refers to the favorable or unfavorable responses towards a particular object. Learners show negative or positive reactions to the speakers or the target language. It is an observable fact that learners with positive affections will get better results than those with negative responses in the test. One of the most effective and practical ways to help learners improve the level of performance is adopting positive attitudes towards the test.

The importance of the problem

It can be clearly seen that learners' favorable reactions towards the target language or the target-language culture greatly affect their language learning. Attitudes towards the test are outstanding predictors of learners' behaviors in the test. Listeners' feelings, beliefs should be taken into account since their attitudes affect their performance in the test. More specifically, the study investigates the Vietnamese EFL learners' attitudes towards the IELTS listening test, taking the two aspects of attitudes namely affective and cognitive into account. The former aspect of attitude explored the listeners' affective attitudes towards the test. The later aspect of attitude deals with their perceptions of challenges of taking the test. The researcher also gives some recommendations for the Vietnamese EFL teachers so that they can make improvements in their teaching the IELTS listening test and make good preparation for their students in taking the IELTS listening test. Language teachers, syllabus designers can benefit from investigating learners' attitudes which paves the ways for gaining insight into learning process and teaching process.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of the IELTS Listening section

The IELTS listening test consists of four sections with 10 questions each. The first two sections pertaining circumstances set in everyday social contexts. Listeners may hear a conversation between 2 speakers in section 1, for example, a conversation about travel arrangements. In section 2, they may hear a monologue about local facilities. The last two sections are relevant to situations set in educational training contexts. In section 3, there is a conversation up to 4 speakers, for example, a conversation between two university students with their tutor. And there is speech on academic interest in the final section (ielts.org).

Attitudes

Attitudes have drawn a lot of attention from a number of researchers in this field. Thurstone (1931) defined attitudes as positive or negative affective responses for an object. Fuson (1942) and Campbell (1950) also suggested a definition of attitudes in relation to behavior tendency of an individual in a specific situation. Several authors viewed attitudes from the concept of evaluation which refers to a summary evaluation of an object or thought. Attitudes consist of three components which are built around its central components including affection, behavior, and cognition (Taylor, 2006). According to Feng and Chen (2009), "learning process is an emotional process. It is affected by different emotional factors. The teachers and his students engage in various emotional activities in it and varied fruits of emotions are yielded" (p94). Attitude can help learners to express their positive or negative feelings towards the surrounding situations. The behavioral aspect of attitude refers to an individual's action in

particular circumstances as suggested by Kara (2009). The final component of attitude is associated with a person's belief, knowledge concerning specific matters. It can be inferred from this definition that cognitive aspect of attitude related to learners' beliefs about the knowledge they acquire and their comprehension during the learning process. According to Zainol et al. (2012), it may be divided into four steps as follows: linking the former knowledge and the new one, creating new knowledge, checking new knowledge, and applying the new knowledge in many situations.

The role of attitudes in language

Attitude is also one of the main factors impacting inspiration in language learning. This argument was further developed by Brown (2000). He indicated that language learners make the most of favorable attitudes to facilitate their second language acquisition while unfavorable attitudes would result in reduced incentive. Attitudes are one of the critical elements contributing to the success of language learners. Learners who possess positive/negative attitudes towards a certain language can affect their performance on a language test (Zainol et al, 2012).

Challenges Vietnamese EFL learners may face in the IELTS listening test

Numerous studies have been carried out concerning attitudes in language learning. However, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, little studies have been conducted pertaining to the Vietnamese EFL learners' perceptions of challenges of taking the IELTS listening test. Rubin (1994) pointed out some factors that EFL learners perceived make listening difficult in non-testing conditions or in testing conditions including text characteristic, interlocutor characteristic, listener characteristic, and process characteristic. Bloomfield et al. (2010) also proposed three factors: characteristics of listeners, characteristics of passage, and characteristics of the testing conditions. Although a range of factors discussed above, the researcher only focus on problems related to bottom-up processing and top-down processing which are relevant to the specifications of the IELTS listening test.

Bottom-up processing

A large number of studies have been conducted to look into the impact of bottom-up processing on listening comprehension (Buck, 2001; Brown, 2001; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Rubin, 1994; Rost, 2011; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Challenges relevant to bottom-up processing should be taken into consideration such as listening for specific details, writing correct numbers, recognizing the letters of the English alphabet, writing correct grammar, understanding fast speech, understanding new words, identifying the speakers, listening to various accents and phonological modifications, understanding paraphrases.

Listening for specific details

In the IELTS listening test, listeners are required to listen for specific details which are supposed to be related to real-life skills. In other words, it requires listeners to understand clearly stated information or the listeners should be involved in the local level of the listening passage and locates the required information. Listening for details may cause difficulties for most of listeners in the IELTS listening test. Therefore, prediction skills should be used before listening since it can help the listeners to know exactly what information they are going to listen for.

Writing correct numbers

Listeners usually have problems with listening for numbers and writing down the correct numbers that they hear in the first section of the listening test. One of the most common problems is certain numbers that sound similar, for example, 50 and 15, 31st and 33th, 52 and

62, 22nd and 27th, etc. These numbers may cause confusion for listeners which should be taken into account and if possible, be supplied with practice materials.

Recognizing the letters of the English alphabet

Another common obstacle that listeners perceived in the test related to spelling. Listeners are required to listen for name of a person or place that is spelt out letter by letter for them, which are very likely to occur in section one of the listening text. Listeners' answers will be marked wrong if they make a spelling mistake. Letters are hard to differentiate should be taken into consideration in the teaching and learning activities such as: A and H, M and N, J and G, E and I, S and X, B and P, etc.

Writing correct grammar

Completion task is one of the most frequently used tasks in the test, so listeners often have difficulties in writing correct grammar in the test. Or else they will be penalized for grammatical mistakes. Therefore, grammatical knowledge should be included in the learning process since it helps listeners predict the necessary information in the gaps. It is advised that listeners should take into consideration verb-subject agreement, singular/plural noun, articles, etc. when completing the gaps.

Understanding fast speech

The majority of listeners seem to have experience of listening to something and not understanding it because the speakers talk so fast. Numerous studies look into the correlation between fast speech and listening comprehension. Griffiths (2012) noted that listening comprehension was worse at higher speech rate and better at slower speech rate when he compared the impacts of three various speech rates (127, 188, 250 wpm) on listening comprehension.

Understanding new words

Listening to new words is definitely difficult for the Vietnamese EFL learners. Field (2003) shared the same view with Rost (2011) that one of the main obstacles to listeners' breakdown in listening comprehension is vocabulary limitations. It is in line with (Bloomfield et al., 2010) who stated that the level of difficulty of the listening text may increase if listeners faced with infrequent lexical phrases. The IELTS listening test consists of a variety of topics which set in academic contexts. Therefore, there may be existing unfamiliar words in various fields in the third and final sections of the listening text. Lack of vocabulary knowledge will lead to listeners' failure in understanding the listening passage.

Identifying the speakers

Another problem that listeners might face in the IELTS listening test is the number of speakers in the listening text. It is supported by Underwood (1989) that the more speakers appear in the listening text, the tougher the passages are. To be more specific, listeners are required to listen for a conversation up to four speakers in the third section of the listening text. Therefore, it is hard for them to differentiate between the speakers as compared to the first section with two speakers. In contrast, what listeners need to do is only listen to one speaker developing the argument in the first and final section of the listening text (Rixon, 1986).

Listening to different accents

Listening to speakers with various accents could cause frustrations in listeners as different groups of speakers pronounce English language differently. The most common accents are pertaining to geographical areas and social groups. It can be seen that a range of accents included in the IELTS listening test such as British, Australian, New Zealand, American, and

Canadian (ielts.org). Therefore, listeners should get accustomed to understanding these accents by listening to radio stations, TV shows, podcasts, and movies.

Listening to phonological modifications

Failure in recognizing phonological modifications can lead to the significant reduction in second language listeners' comprehension. Such modifications are regular and rely on a set of complex rules. In his book "assessing listening", Buck (2001) suggested some popular phonological modifications namely assimilation, elision, intrusion, etc. To illustrate, some sounds are modified by the sounds next to them, for example, 'won't you' is usually pronounced 'wonchoo'. Some sounds are simply dropped, for example, 'next day' is usually pronounced 'nexday'.

Understanding paraphrases

Paraphrasing is frequently used in the IELTS listening paper which potentially causes difficulties in the process of listening comprehension. Chiang and Dunkel (1992) conducted a study to explore whether paraphrasing has effects on EFL learners' listening comprehension or not. The results indicated that more skilled listeners have better understanding of the listening text than less skilled listeners. As a result, recognizing paraphrases is an incredibly essential skill in the IELTS listening test.

Top-down processing

Apart from challenges related to bottom-up processing, listeners also deal with troubles concerning top-down processing (Buck, 2001, Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Rubin, 1994). Difficulties pertaining to top-down processing can be classified into three categories namely problems related to listening for main ideas, understanding unfamiliar topics, and comprehending functional language.

Listening for main ideas

Besides challenges in listening for specific details, listeners feel that they do not understand the spoken language since they fail in listening for main ideas. The main ideas enable listeners to interpret the overall meaning of the listening text. They are the most important message that the speakers want to convey. Sometimes it is not difficult to find out the main ideas since they appear at the beginning of the text. However, sometimes listeners find it hard to figure out the overall meaning of the listening text without listening to the entire conversation.

Understanding unfamiliar topics

Another obvious factor that may influence listening comprehension is unfamiliar topics Buck (2001). There is no doubt that it can be easy for listener to interpret the message of familiar topics than unfamiliar ones. The specifications of the IELTS listening test indicate that a range of topics pertaining to survival English and academic English included in the test. The first two sections include general topics with common vocabulary while the two last sections consist of situations concerning school-related topics with academic terminologies. The idea is supported by Buck (2001), who suggested there is a significant relationship between the types of topics and difficulties. He mentioned that academic topics are related to more difficult items compared to non-academic topics. As a result, topics in section three and four may hamper listeners' listening comprehension as they may have some academic language as well as the more complexity of grammatical structures and sentences in comparison with section one and two of the listening test.

Comprehending functional knowledge

Failure in understanding the meaning of functional language becomes another problem in comprehending the test (ielts.org). Comprehending a description of a place or a location or following directions is a complex process for listeners. It is advisable that listeners should study the map or plan carefully before they listen so that they have clear image in their mind which helps them understand what they hear. Sometimes it is quite hard for them to listen for a description of a process with some academic terminologies. In addition, listeners also have trouble in identifying the speakers' attitudes and opinions, which are likely to occur in the first and third section of the listening text (Pauline, 2014).

Relevant studies on the IELTS listening test

Breeze and Miller (2009) conducted a research on the validity of the IELTS listening scores as an indicator of Spanish students' coping ability and found students' IELTS listening scores and their academic performance have a positive relationship. Field (2009) in a research examined the cognitive validity of lecture-based question in the IELTS Listening paper in test and non-test conditions and discovered that note-taking in test conditions are more formidable than that of non-test conditions. However, note-taking is more complicated in the non-test conditions regarding forming the interpretations of the text, extracting relevant information from irrelevant information, and coping with topic complication. Golchi (2012) came up with a finding that negative relationship can be found between listening anxiety and listening comprehension and listening strategy use. The results also indicated that metacognitive strategies were utilized by high anxious learners more than low anxious ones. No significant difference was identified between two language institutes namely cognitive and social/affective strategies. Badger and Yan (2009) did a research on strategies, sub-strategies, and tactics that native speakers of English and native speakers of Chinese employed when taking the IELTS listening test. The results indicated that no fundamental distinction can be recognized between the two groups with regard to strategy use. Winke and Lim (2014) undertook a study to investigate the effects of test anxiety and testwiseness on listeners' performance in the IELTS listening test. There were one control group and two treatment groups. The result showed that there were no differences in test-taking strategies, test anxiety among three groups. In addition, there was a negative connection between the test-takers' scores and their test anxiety. The findings of Phakiti (2016) revealed that most of the listeners tend to be overconfident in four sections of the IELTS Listening test. In addition, there were complex interconnection between the participants' traits and their metacognitive and strategy use, test difficulty and their performance in the test, the effect of strategy use and appraisal confidence on the IELTS listening performance. A study conducted by Sabet and Babaei (2017) investigated that bottom-up processing underlined most listening tasks in the IELTS listening test. Most of the listening tasks require basic understanding of the small textual units.

Relevant studies on attitudes towards the IELTS test

Rasti (2009) conducted a study on the attitudes towards the IELTS test of Iranian learners and his results showed that nearly 80% of the participants had positive attitudes towards the IELTS but there were no significant connection between the candidates' attitudes towards the IELTS test and their age, sex, educational background and test scores. Ata (2015) surveyed 200 speaking students of China, India, Saudi Arabia at the Monash, Melbourne, and Deakin university language centers to explore their attitudes, knowledge and education towards different components of the IELTS test and the effects of their responses towards their performance on the IELTS test. He suggested that students' attitudes exert enormous influence on their performance on the IELTS test. The findings showed that students' misunderstanding of motivation and language learning might prevent them from obtaining the four language skills.

As can be seen from the studies on the IELTS listening test, they measure the validity of the test, the correlation between IELTS listening anxiety with strategy use and listening comprehension. Regarding studies on the attitudes towards the IELTS test of EFL learners, Rasti (2009) and Ata (2015) reported that learners show negative attitudes towards the IELTS listening section. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, little empirical studies have been conducted to investigate the Vietnamese EFL learners' attitudes towards the IELTS listening test. Therefore, the researcher makes efforts to examine learners' emotional and cognitive attitudes towards the IELTS listening test. More specifically, the study looks into the learners' affection towards the test, and learners' perceptions of their challenges of taking the IELTS listening test.

Research questions [RQ]

RQ1: What are the attitudes of Vietnamese EFL learners towards the IELTS listening test in terms of affective aspect?

RQ2: What are the attitudes of Vietnamese EFL learners towards challenges of taking the IELTS listening test in terms of cognitive aspect?

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The descriptive survey research design was adopted in this study. The advantage of this design is that it is useful in investigating attitudes, beliefs, opinions, etc. of a large group of subjects more quickly than other methods (McLeod, 2014). The participants were required to answer all the questionnaire items in order to give their attitudes towards the IELTS listening test in terms of affective and cognitive aspects of attitude.

Sampling

Convenience sampling was used in this study to provide information on demographic and sample characteristic since it is the most frequently used method in educational research. It is supported by Frankael et al. (2011, p. 100) who suggested that the researchers can use convenience sampling if they find it complicated to select a random or systematic non-random sample.

Participants

The participants in this study were learners at Branch 1, 2, and 4 of Foreign Language Center (FLC) - Ho Chi Minh City University of Education (UE), The Office for International Study Programs (OISP) - a subdivision of Bach Khoa University (BKU) - Vietnam National University, Faculty of Foreign Languages (FFL) - Ton Duc Thang University (TDTU), and American Academy (AMA). Of all participants, 42.5% (N=147) were male, and 57.5% (n=199) were female. Most of learners (75.7%) have studied English for 9 to 14 years. It was followed by 15 to 20 years (20.2%), 3 to 8 years (19.7%), over 22 years (2%) respectively. The majority of learners (74.9%) have ages ranging from 19 to 35 years, followed by 12 to 18 years (25.1%).

Research instruments

The questionnaire was employed in this study. It was designed based on the literature and some items were based on Pauline Cullen's book (The Official Guide to the IELTS test) (2014). The questionnaire consists of three parts: the first part investigates the backgrounds of the participants in order to collect their personal information, the second part encompasses three items which explores learners' feeling towards the test, and the final part includes seventeen items which ask for learners' perceived challenges of taking the test. The questionnaire was written in both English and Vietnamese which was designed in the format of close-ended

questions rated on a seven-point Likert scale which ranges from (1) *very untrue of me*, (2) *untrue of me*, (3) *somewhat untrue of me*, (4) *neutral*, and (5) *somewhat true of me*, (6) *true of me*, (7) *very true of me*.

Procedure for data collection and data analysis

In order to design a pilot study questionnaire, the researcher conducted the interviews in Vietnamese first to investigate learners' affective and cognitive attitudes towards the IELTS listening test. The results of the interviews and information from literature were used to build up the pilot study questionnaire. After that, the pilot study questionnaires were distributed to 20 Vietnamese learners who are taking the IELTS preparation courses at AMA to ensure the reliability of the questionnaire. The questionnaires were then thoroughly analyzed by using SPSS with the Cronbach's Alpha was .82. The pilot study questionnaires were made some adjustments before it was given out to the entire respondents of the study. To avoid any misunderstanding and confusion may be caused by the questionnaire items, only the Vietnamese version of the questionnaire was delivered to 346 Vietnamese learners during their break time at three branches of FLC of UE, OISP of BKU, FFL of TDTU and AMA. The researcher gave further explanation to learners if they have problems in understanding the questionnaire items. Participants' responses in the questionnaires were analyzed in detail by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 22.0. In other words, descriptive statistics were computed to investigate learners' attitudes. As suggested by James and Theodore, descriptive data are used "to characterize or describe a set of numbers in terms of central tendency, and show how the number disperse, or vary, around the center" (p124). Frequency and percentage were computed for the data in each item in the questionnaire to compute descriptive statistics.

RESULTS

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Discussion

RQ1: What are the attitudes of Vietnamese EFL learners towards the IELTS listening test in terms of affective aspect?

Concerning the first research question, the result of descriptive statistics show that the mean score of listeners' enjoyment towards the IELTS listening test is 0.45 (SD = 0.499). This result indicates that the majority of respondents were not interested in the IELTS listening test and listeners' disinterest in the test is remarkably consistent as the responses vary from 1 to 2, which is shown in Table 1:

Table 1. Results on listeners' enjoyment of the IELTS listening test

N= 346					
Enjoyment	Items	Mean	Min	Max	SD
	3.In general, you are interested in the IELTS listening test	0.45	1	2	0.499

As can be shown in table 2, the participants did not favor the IELTS listening test. The mean score of the category of confidence is 3.84. In particular, among the negative statements, the majority of listeners did not feel very confident about their listening comprehension (M =3.32). Table 2 shows that item 2c and 2d did not receive much agreement from the participants (M = 3.29, M = 3.05 respectively). It can be said that listeners found section 4 more challenging than section 3.

It can apparently be said that statements 2a and 2b obtained participants' positive emotional attitude toward the areas of the test. In comparison with item 2c and 2d, most of the respondents agreed that they felt confident about section 1 and 2 of the IELTS listening test with the mean score equal to 4.96 and 4.59 respectively. Item 2a received the highest agreement (M = 4.96), which indicates that listeners were confident about section 1 most. The mean score of item 2b was 4.59 and was lower than that of item 2a, which suggests that the participants did not have much confidence about section 2 than section 1.

In general, the mean score of enjoyment category and confidence category was negative, which suggests that listeners did not fond of the IELTS listening test as well as did not confident about the IELTS listening test.

Table 2: Results on listeners' confidence in the IELTS listening test

N= 346					
Confidence M= 3.84	Items	Mean	Min	Max	SD
	1.I feel confident about my listening comprehension	3.32	1	7	1.471
	2.I feel confident with				
	a. section 1 (conversation in everyday or social context)	4.96	1	7	1.447
	b. section 2 (monologue in everyday or social context)	4.59	1	7	1.364
	c. section 3 (conversation in educational or training context)	3.29	1	7	1.439
d. Section 4 (monologue or talk in educational or training context)	3.05	1	7	1.566	

RQ2: What are the attitudes of Vietnamese EFL learners towards challenges of taking the IELTS listening test in terms of cognitive aspect?

Statements 4 to 14 obtained learners' negative cognitive attitudes towards challenges concerning bottom-up processing, which is shown in table 3. Interestingly, most of the respondents (78.7%) opined that they have problems with writing correct grammar. The speed of the speech cause great difficulties to the participants in the test, which constitutes 75.5%. Similarly, Rasti (2009) and Ata (2015) reported that most of the participants in his study showed negative attitudes towards the fast speech of the speakers. New words bring about a problem in listening test, which made up 71.7%. In addition, phonological modifications of the listening text, is claimed by 69.4% of listeners to be the frequent obstruction in listening. In addition, understanding paraphrases is considered as a major issue for 238 listeners (64.4%). Recognizing the letters of the English alphabet was supposed to be another obstacle for listeners to decode the spoken text (63%). Nearly two-thirds of listeners (62.1%) found listening for correct numbers could be a big confusion for them. It was followed by listening for specific details with 60.2%. The results also show that 59.3% of listeners have to face with the problem of identifying the speakers. A variety of accents is also an obstacle to listeners in the test (57.8%). This result is similar to the findings of a study by Rasti (2009) and Ata (2015), the descriptive statistics revealed that 90.7% of learners show negative attitude in their ability to understand accents. To sum up, the respondents' cognitive attitudes towards obstacles relevant to bottom-up processing is negative, which is consistent with the findings of Rasti (2009) and Ata (2015) who found EFL learners' negative cognitive attitudes to the IELTS listening section.

Table 3: Results on the Vietnamese EFL learners' perceived challenges pertaining to bottom-up processing

	Items	Frequency	Percent
Challenges related to bottom-up processing	4. Writing correct grammar	272	78.7%
	5. Understanding fast speech of a speaker	261	75.5%
	6. Understanding new words	248	71.7%
	7. Listening for phonological modification (assimilation, elision, contraction, etc.)	240	69.4%
	8. Understanding paraphrases	223	64.4%
	9. Recognizing the letters of the English alphabet that are spelt out	218	63%
	10. Listening for correct numbers	215	62.1%
	11. Listening for specific details	208	60.2%
	12. Identifying the speaker	205	59.3%
	13. Understanding different accents	200	57.8%

As shown in table.4, most of the participants showed that understanding a description of directions and locations can confuse them in the test, which accounted for the highest percentage (77.2%). The Vietnamese EFL learners also cope with other challenges during the listening test such as understanding a description of a process and labelling parts of a machine or device, which made up 72.8% and 70% respectively. Handling unfamiliar topics may be another source of difficulty for EFL learners, which constituted 68.8%. Two-thirds of listeners (66.5%) got failure in listening for main ideas. It was followed by understanding opinions and attitudes of the speakers which were 63.9% and 59% respectively. Overall, it can be apparently to say that the respondents have negative cognitive attitude towards obstacles concerning top-down processing in the IELTS listening test

Table 4: Results on the Vietnamese EFL learners' perceived challenges concerning top-down processing

	Items	Frequency	Percent
Challenges related to top-down processing	14. Understanding a description of directions and locations	267	77.2%
	15. Understanding a description of a process	252	72.8%
	16. Labelling parts of a machine or device	242	70%
	17. Understanding unfamiliar topics	238	68.8%
	18. Listening for main ideas	230	66.5%
	19. Understanding opinions of the speakers	221	63.9%
	20. Understanding attitudes of the speakers	204	59%

IMPLICATIONS

Pertaining to the negative affective and cognitive attitudes towards the IELTS listening test, Vietnamese EFL teachers are advised to carry out appropriate teaching methods and learning activities of teaching the IELTS listening section effectively to enhance their students' positive attitude towards the IELTS listening test. In addition, teachers should consider listeners' emotions, beliefs and encourage them to have positive attitudes towards the listening test. This is due to the fact that positive attitudes play a central role in language learning and can affect students' performance on the listening test. An encouraging atmosphere in the IELTS classes should be created to build up the listeners' positive attitudes towards the listening section. The

importance of the IELTS listening section should be highlighted and teachers should motivate listeners to learn the listening section by investigating the listeners' needs and interests. Concerning the challenges that listeners perceived in the test, teachers are recommended to take into account all of these issues by supplementing a variety of task types aiming to assist listeners in improving their listening comprehension with the focus on problems related to bottom-up processing and top-down processing. Supplementary materials should pay attention to boosting listeners' bottom-up and top-down listening skills in the IELTS listening test. In addition, practice materials should be provided for listeners in the process of learning so that they can practice more at home. In order to accommodate the listeners' need and interest, the content and design of the IELTS listening section should be reviewed by the IELTS administrators. In general, the study provides an insight into the Vietnamese EFL learners' affective and cognitive attitudes towards the IELTS listening test, add to the research on EFL learners' attitudes and the growing studies of the IELTS listening test.

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