

# Benefits and challenges of authentic listening materials and how they can be used for teaching listening

Salma Ikhtiari

SMA Negeri I Bulukumba, salmaikhtiari@hotmail.com

---

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT						
<p><b>Keywords:</b> listening, teaching listening, authentic materials</p>	<p><i>This article attempts to discuss the benefits and problems that may arise in using authentic listening materials, and how they can be utilized in enhancing students' listening skills. One of the influencing factors for successful learning in listening classes is materials which can give new information and knowledge to eventually enable students to learn and improve their skills. Teachers as classroom managers are required to choose materials that are suitable to their students as well as challenging and interesting for them to want to learn. Authentic listening materials such as movies, speeches, talks, interviews, news and some others can be alternatives other than ready-to-use materials offered by many course books. For one thing, students can get a wide range of these authentic materials for free. They are usually available on the internet free of charge. These materials also contain authentic language used by native and non-native speakers, which can be used as listening exposure, learning input and communicative activities for students. Audio-visual materials are definitely interesting and motivating, too. On the other hand, these materials, which widely vary in numbers, levels of difficulty, topic as well as other values, require careful consideration to select, and this may take extra time and thinking, not to mention the languages as well as the contents that may not be suitable with the syllabus. Therefore, adaptation, even manipulation, may be made to these authentic materials to be used in listening classes so that students can get what they need in order to learn, especially in gaining sufficient listening skills.</i></p>						
Article History:	<table><thead><tr><th>Submission</th><th>Accepted</th><th>Published</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>21 August 2022</td><td>01 September 2022</td><td>30 October 2022</td></tr></tbody></table>	Submission	Accepted	Published	21 August 2022	01 September 2022	30 October 2022
Submission	Accepted	Published					
21 August 2022	01 September 2022	30 October 2022					

---

## 1. Introduction

Listening is one of the four language skills of English that students are required to master. In teaching listening, Richards gives two perspectives, listening as comprehension, as our traditional view on the nature of listening; and listening as acquisition, which provides input which triggers the further development of second language proficiency (2013). It is for the latter perspective that the teaching of listening lies upon. It means that listening proficiency is no longer seen as secondary, compared to speaking, and that the teaching of listening does, and should provide an essential basis for other skills, especially speaking. In listening

classrooms, teachers are required to facilitate the language learning by giving sufficient skills and knowledge.

Hand in hand with the training of listening strategies, other issue for the meaningful learning is the choice of materials. English teachers have been provided with a large number of ready-to-use course-books for each as well as integrated language skills, but the advancement of technology and information makes it possible to other sources of materials which are produced for purposes other than language teaching, the so called authentic materials.

Several definitions are given about authentic materials. One definition is given by Rogers and Medley (in Mousavi and Iravani, 2012), that authentic materials are oral and written language materials used in daily situations by native speakers of the language'. Some more comprehensive definitions of authentic materials are stated by Hwang, Martinez and Harmer (in Su-Chin, 2008), that authentic materials are items designed for native speakers of English and were not designed for language students per se. Nu nan (in Oura, 2013) defines authentic materials as "spoken and written language data that have been produced in the course of genuine communication, and not specifically written for purposes of language teaching." Similarly, Jordan (in Kilickaya, 2004) suggests authentic texts as texts that are not written for language teaching purposes. Those later statements adds to the definition of authentic materials, that they are real texts used in real forms and situations by (English) native speakers and not designed for purposes of language teaching..

Examples of authentic materials are newspaper and magazine articles, TV and radio news programs, movies, songs and so forth. Gebhard (in Oura, 2013) gives more examples of authentic materials that teachers can use as sources of material: authentic listening-viewing materials -- TV commercials, news clips, comedy shows, movies, professionally audio-taped short stories and novels, radio ads, songs; authentic visual materials - slides, photographs, paintings, children's artwork, stick figure drawings, wordless street signs; authentic printed materials -- newspaper articles, movie advertisements, astrology columns, sports reports.

## **2. Research Methodology**

Many experts support the use of authentic listening materials to teach listening, even as early as in primary level of education, although the selection of materials must be based on some aspects like students' level of proficiency, content or topic, as well as the complexity of language used in those materials. An advantage of introducing authentic materials at an early stage of language learning is to help students become familiar with the target language (Field in Mousavi and Iravani, 2012). According to Omaggio Hadley (1993) and Rogers and Medley (1988), if students are to develop a functional proficiency in the language and to use the language communicatively in the real world, they must begin to encounter the language of that world in the classroom (in Mousavi and Iravani, 2012). Through listening to authentic materials, students are exposed to different styles of language and content spoken by the native speakers, which they acquire as input for later use in speaking. Even when they do not understand what the speakers say, students will notice while listening. Richards argues that noticing plays an important part in second language teaching, as students will get input as well as intake for their further language acquisition.

Another benefit students can take when using authentic materials in listening is that these materials are motivating and challenging. Authentic materials had a positive effect on increasing students' motivation and made learning more enjoyable (Karpova, 1999; Katchen, 1993 in Su-Chin, 2008). Many authentic materials such as movies, songs, news and interviews contain information that is closely related to their life experiences and interests. Students feel highly interested when knowing the story of a certain song or movie happens to be quite similar to what they experienced or knew. News or talkshows of current issues can also be challenging because students' different prior knowledge of the issues can lead to further discussion.

Further, authentic materials used for teaching listening provide authentic and important knowledge of society and culture. Many internationally-published English coursebooks contain stereotypical and oversimplified cultural information to learners (Bao, Oat: 2013). The mistakes found in such books are among others stereotyping gender, nationality, behavior and lifestyle. Students who get such kind of information might perceive it as the way it is presented in the books in teachers do not give further insight of what really is or happens. Different forms of authentic material can provide real and authentic values of a people. Teachers can combine listening activities with other skills such as speaking and reading for more integrated and meaningful learning.

Meanwhile, Su-Chin (2008) summarizes from different sources the different advantages of using authentic materials, some of which are quoted as follows:

1. Authentic materials provided exposure to real language and related more closely to students' needs. Students were exposed to real world intercultural discourse.
2. -in the English language, changes could be reflected in the materials so that students and instructors both understood the changes.
3. Authentic materials could be used for practicing mini-skills, such as scanning, or micro-skills of listening, including listening to news reports, and identifying the names of people or countries.
4. Authentic materials had an intrinsic educational value and kept students informed about what was happening in the world.
5. Authentic materials provided an opportunity to transmit information and foster communication and understanding across culture.
6. Authentic materials were applicable and adaptable for classroom use.
7. Authentic materials were realistic, ready-to-use, relevant, and triggered the process of natural language acquisition for students.
8. Authentic materials provided valuable support (creative approach to teaching) and could be used for a specially designed curriculum.

### 3. Findings

The many advantages of authentic materials that teachers can make use of are not without challenges. When using authentic materials to teach listening, teachers may encounter these problems. One of them is that they are too difficult to understand, especially for students with lower levels of listening ability (Martinez, 2002). Many lower-level students felt anxious and frustrated when they faced unfamiliar materials (Su-Chin, 2008). In a mixed-ability class, this may cause problems because while authentic materials are motivating for high-achievers, they are quite demotivating for lower ones.

Another challenge in using authentic materials is that they do not always comply with the syllabus in terms of the content as well as language. Authentic materials often contain difficult language, unneeded vocabulary items, and complex language structures, which causes a burden for teachers in lower-level classes (Richardson Kilickaya, 2004). Also, the vocabulary might not be relevant to the student's immediate needs (Martinez, 2002). This can cause difficulties for students to gain better listening comprehension.

In relation to the previously-mentioned problem, in order to select materials suitable for the syllabus and students' needs, teachers must spend more time searching for the materials and designing the listening activities (Tamo, 2009). Martinez and Peacock also point out that the preparation of the materials could be time-consuming if special preparation was needed; the investment of time might not be feasible or realistic (Su-Chin, 2008).

#### **4. Discussion**

Despite the several challenges of using authentic listening materials, I support the idea that teachers should use them for teaching listening. Some adaptations and modifications can be done in the preparation stage so that students can make the best use of them.

First, although authentic materials are often too difficult or too complex to understand, teachers can make them more comprehensible by giving sufficient pre-listening activities and designing more simple tasks, especially for less familiar materials for students with lower levels of listening ability. Meyer and Richards & Renandya suggest providing students with essential background knowledge and simple tasks to perform while listening (in Mousavi and Iravani, 2012). Teachers need to provide pedagogical support, especially in listening situations (Chavez in Tamo, 2009). It is important that teachers build students' schemata by, for example, giving some related information about the topic, encouraging students to guess or predict the content of the listening passage and the vocabulary they might expect to hear, or giving some visuals. Teachers can also design tasks that are simple but able to provide students with interesting activities. The tasks are arranged from a more general understanding of the idea, to exercises on some detailed information. Students can do various activities while listening, for example listening and drawing, listening and picture-matching, listening and singing, and so on. Using videos can also facilitate student understanding on the content.

Second, in the post listening stage, students are encouraged to do more integrated activities, for example by doing role-play, discussion, writing summary, and so on. Students often feel interested and excited when they are given topics which are closely related to their daily lives, and topics which are on the trend. After students listen for the general as well as the detailed information on the listening stage, they can have a further discussion on the topic. Teachers may provide with some related issues or information to generate lively discussion.

Third, teachers can ask students to do some extensive listening or reading outside the class. For less familiar topics, listening to materials on related topics will help them get more comprehensive understanding, as well as help them practice listening strategies. Students are grouped, and each group searches for materials on a certain topic which will be discussed in the next meeting. This way students can get more knowledge of different issues or topics,

which later can serve as their background knowledge for other listening activities in the classroom.

## 5. Conclusion

In teaching listening it is important that teachers provide students with sufficient knowledge and skills so they can use the acquired knowledge can be used for other skills, especially speaking. One of the most important factors is the choice of materials. Authentic listening materials give a number of benefits, among other things the real and authentic language by native speakers, knowledge of real people and real culture, and the interest and motivation factors in using them. In spite of the challenges in terms of the complexity of language and content, the appropriateness with syllabus and students' need and ability, and the preparation stage, teachers can modify the materials to facilitate student better learning by designing various interesting tasks, on the pre as well as post listening stages. It is therefore encouraged to teachers to use authentic materials to support the teaching of listening to students to acquire English proficiency.

## References

- Bao, Oat. (2018). Cultural mistakes in english language teaching materials. *English Education UNS International TEFL Conference*.
- Kilickaya, Ferit. (2014). Authentic materials and cultural content in EFL classrooms. *The Internet TESL Journal*, Vol. X, No. 7, July 2004 <http://iteslj.org>
- Martinez, Alejandro G. (2012). Authentic Materials: An Overview. (online document). Retrieved from <http://www3.telus.net/linguisticsissues/authenticmaterials.html>
- Mousavi, Seyyed Ahmad & Iravani, Hasan. (2012). The effect of authentic versus non-authentic aural materials on EFL learners' listening comprehension. *English Language and Literature Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1; March 2012.
- Oura, Gail K. (2016). Authentic task-based materials: bringing the real world into the classroom. *Sophia Junior College Faculty Bulletin*, 21, 65-84.
- Richards, Jack C. (2015). Second thoughts on teaching listening. *RELC journal*, 36(1), 85-92.
- Shu-Chin, Su. (2018). Attitude of students and instructors toward authentic materials in selected adult TESL programs. *Aletheia Conference on Foreign Language Teaching and Cross-Cultural Studies*.
- Tamo, Daniela. (2019). The use of authentic materials in classrooms.