
THE USE OF AUTHENTIC MATERIALS IN TEACHING LISTENING AT SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract

Among the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) that are recognized as the keys to 'knowing' the language, listening is probably the least important to be taught. Actually speaking and listening are always interrelated. However listening is the most "underdeveloped" skill. Basically, they realize that listening cannot be separated from other language skills like speaking, reading and writing. Listening is important since students may receive much of their information of their school through listening to instructors and to another. Listening has been regarded as the most frequently used language skills in the classroom. Furthermore nowadays listening skill is inclusive in national examination for the level of Senior High School. In Indonesia the teachers tend to ignore to teach this skill by skipping it even though it is clearly stated in curriculum. The teachers skip teaching listening for many reasons, such as lack of teaching material, lack of school facilities, the speakers in the recorded material speak too fast, the students do not understand the vocabularies and the sentences used by the speakers. The reason of lack of material for teaching of listening nowadays can be minimized, since the teachers can use authentic materials recorded from internet, TV and radio programs. Teachers can select the materials needed for their teaching based on the topic they are going to teach and the level of their students. Therefore teachers have no reasons to ignore and skip teaching of listening, for they can have their authentic teaching materials easily.

Key words: authentic listening materials, teaching listening.

A. Introduction

Many experts and language teachers have written many books and conducted researches about the importance of teaching listening. They also have explained and discussed it in many conferences and seminars. There is an expectation from them to make listening skill as one of the language skills which has the same attention with other language skills like speaking, reading and writing. Even though they have tried harder to 'promote' listening, but the fact shows that the ignorance of teaching listening continues. According to Flowerdew (1994) even though listening comprehension has held an important place in language teaching, most second language research into comprehension has been concerned with reading. Chulim (2008) supports that idea, that listening comprehension has received relatively little attention among researches, compared to the number of research that has been directed at the nature of written and spoken discourse and reading comprehension. In Indonesia, the importance of Listening skill is clearly stated in the curriculum that the aim of teaching English is to enable students to communicate in English spoken or written. Related to that purpose, the government has included listening as the language skill examined in National Final Examination for Senior High School level. It means the teachers are needed to teach the four language skills integrated.

On the other hand the facts show that many teachers tend to ignore and skip teaching listening for many reasons such as, lack of teaching facilities, and teaching materials as well. The English teachers tend to teach speaking, reading and writing, because most of the English books provide the teaching materials for these three skills. Their English books do not provide material for teaching of listening. For teachers, teaching these three skills (speaking, reading and writing) do not need them to prepare a 'complicated' media and teaching material, however for teaching listening they have to prepare the listening material in the form of audio or audio visual. For many teachers this is difficult. To overcome that problem, teachers are suggested to use authentic listening materials (Tamo: 2009). The listening materials needed for teaching of listening are easy to get, because internet, TV and radio programs can be used as the sources of listening authentic materials.

B. DISCUSSION

What is listening?

Listening is the first communication skill acquired by everyone. It is an invisible mental process that plays a vital role in daily lives. People listen for different purposes such as entertainment, academic purposes or obtaining necessary information. As for foreign language learning, listening is of paramount importance since it provides the language input (Rost, 1994).

There are many definitions of Listening proposed by many experts. Listening is the activity of paying attention to and trying to get meaning from something we hear (Underwood 1989). It is the ability to identify and understand what people are saying (Yagang, 1993). This involves understanding a speaker's accent or pronunciation, his grammar and his vocabulary and grasping his meaning, Howatt and Dakin in Saricoban (1999). Listening is also an active process which requires the listeners to participate in that process (Yang 1999). Vandergrift (2002) adds that listening is a complex, and active process of interpretation which listeners match what they hear with what they already know. Helgesen in Nunan (2003) says that listening is an active process of not only what people hear but also how people connect it to other information they have already known.

Based on theory of communication, Rost (2002) views listening as a part of transactional process in which all participants are simultaneously 'sending' and 'receiving' messages. He says definitions of listening based on four orientations or perspectives. First, from the perspective of receptive, listening is viewed as receiving what the speaker actually say. Second, from the perspective of constructive, listening can be defined as constructing and representing meaning. Third, viewed from collaborative perspective, listening is negotiating meaning with speakers and responding it. Fourth, from the view of transformative perspective, it means creating meaning through involvement, imagination and empathy.

Why is Listening important?

Studies show that we spend 80% of our waking hours communicating, and according to research done Lawson (2007) at least 45% of that time is spent for listening). The previous research conducted by Iwankovitch (2001) shows the same result, where the average person spends 9% of his time writing, 16% reading, 30% speaking, and almost half, 45% listening. The importance of listening in communication is enormous. People often focus on their speaking ability believing that good speaking equals good communication. The ability to speak well is a necessary component to successful communication. The ability to listen is equally as important (Staiano: 2012). He argues that listening is by far, one of the most important aspects of communication. So often you pay attention to your speech, your words, your dialect, but neglect your ability to listen.

Schwartz (2003) argues that listening is the language modality that is used most frequently. It has been estimated that adults spend almost half their communication time listening, and students may receive as much as 90% of their in-school information through listening to instructors and to one another. Often, however, language learners do not recognize the level of effort that goes into developing listening ability.

Nunan in Nation and Newton (2009) states that it has been claimed that over 50 percent of the time that the students spend functioning in a foreign language will be devoted to listening. Despite this, we often take the importance of listening for granted, and it is arguably the least understood and most overlooked of the four skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) in the language classroom.

Given the importance of listening in language learning and teaching it is essential for language teachers to help their students become effective listeners. In the communicative approach to language teaching, this means modeling listening strategies and providing listening practice in authentic situations: those learners are likely to encounter when they use the language outside the classroom.

Authentic Listening Materials

Many experts define the meaning of authentic materials. According to Marrow (1977) authentic materials is a stretch of real language, produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to carry a real message of some sort. Hammer (1983) says that authentic materials (either written or spoken) are those which are designed for native speakers: They are real

text designed not for language students, but for the speakers of the language in question, while Nunan (1989) says that authentic material is any material which has not been specifically produced for the purposes of language teaching. According to Lingzhu (2010) the meaning of authentic materials is that they are real language, produced for the native speakers, designed without the teaching purposes.

Based on the definition above, Lingzhu says that there are a large amount of authentic materials in our life such as newspaper and magazine articles, TV and radio broadcast, daily conversation, meetings, documents, speech and film. One of the most useful one is the internet. Martinez (2002) states that internet has disposal large amounts of text. Whereas newspaper and other materials date very quickly, the internet is continuously updated, more visually stimulating as well as interactive. Berardo in Amelia (2011) states that internet is one of the rich sources of authentic materials with a large amount of varied materials being easily accessible.

For teaching of Listening the teachers have to select the material found on the sources because not all materials are suitable for this skill. Some materials are suitable for teaching listening skill but other materials are suitable for other language skills such as speaking, reading and also writing. Gebhard in Lingzhu (2010) classifies the authentic materials into three categories.

1. Authentic Listening-Viewing Materials: TV commercials, quiz shows, cartoon, news clips, comedy shows, movies, soap operas, professional audio-taped short stories and novels, radio ads, songs, documentary and sales pitches.
2. Authentic Visual materials: slides, photographs, paintings, children' art work, stick figure drawing, wordless street signs, silhouettes, picture from magazine, ink blots, postcard pictures wordless picture books, stamps, and X-rays.
3. Authentic Printed Materials: newspaper articles, movie advertisements, astrology columns, sports reports, obituary columns, advice columns, lyrics to songs, restaurant menus, street signs, cereal boxes, candy wrappers, tourist information brochures, university catalogs, telephone books, maps, TV guides, comic books, greeting cards, grocery coupons, pins with messages, announcements and bus schedules.

The authentic materials for teaching of listening can be taken from the natural and spontaneous spoken language materials in the forms of audio and audio visual. Many kinds of TV and radio programs such as news, interviews, lectures, dialogues, discussions, movies, advertisements, announcements, cooking can be recorded as the teaching materials. The other authentic teaching materials are song, video and short stories which may be the interesting ones.

Advantages of Using Authentic Listening Materials

Many experts have stated the advantages of using authentic listening material in the classroom. According to Lingzhu (2010) there are some advantages of using authentic materials; they are:

1. Exposing students to real language

Compared with inauthentic listening materials, authentic listening materials have the advantage of exposing students to the real language- language used in real life. These different features can be summarized mainly into four aspects.

- a. Different redundant features.

It is known that in the ordinary conversation or authentic material speakers tend to say a great deal more than would appear to be necessary in order to convey his message which appears less in authentic listening materials which is called redundancy. Ur (1984) clearly describes the features of redundancy as redundant utterance which may take the forms of repetition, false starts, re-phrasing, self-correction, elaboration, apparently meaningless additions or fills, such as *I mean... or you know..., well..., err...,*. Moreover he says that because of the occurrences of these redundancies, the authentic listening materials are often not well organized. Speakers tend to hesitate, to go back to the beginning of an idea and start again, to repeat themselves, to produce ungrammatical sentences.

- b. Different grammatical features.

The differences between authentic and inauthentic listening materials can be reflected in the differences between the spoken language and written language. Brown and Yule (1983) summarize these as: a) most speakers of English produce spoken language which very much similar than the written language, b) speakers often use incomplete sentences; c) the

- vocabulary of spoken language is usually much less specific than that of written language; d) interactive expressions like *well, oh, uhuh* features are used in spoken language; e) information is packed very much less densely in spoken language than in written language. This means that the vocabulary used in authentic listening materials is different from that used in the inauthentic listening.
- c. Different stylistic features
The authentic listening materials contains elements of natural and spontaneous spoken language, which seems variable, and is very different from one dialect area to another and very different of people of different identities.
 - d. Different environmental features.
Authentic listening materials have background noise while inauthentic listening materials have no background noise. Ur (1984) says that ‘noise’ is the opposite of redundancy. It occurs when the listeners cannot receive or understand information because of interference.
2. Stimulating Students, Motivation.
Authentic listening materials, especially the current popular ones such as clips from media, are always dealing with topics that are familiar with students and relevant to their personal experience. Introducing and utilizing natural materials can be a very meaningful experience for students and can capture the interest and stimulate the imagination of students. So students will be more motivated to learn (Ma in Lingzhu 2010).
 3. Accumulating students’ knowledge.
Authentic materials contain quite an amount of information covering almost every field of human life. Therefore, applying such materials in language teaching can provide students opportunities to accumulate their world knowledge.

Factors to Consider When Selecting Authentic Listening Materials

It is stated in the previous part that there are many advantages of using authentic listening materials, however it should be selected and used properly. Therefore the teacher has to consider the factors in selecting listening authentic materials in the classroom. Wilson (2008) states the considerations are ranged from criteria of its content to its delivery. In the level of material content, there are several factors that need to be considered by the teacher. The factors are interest factors, entertainment factors, cultural accessibility, speech acts, discourse structure, density and language level. Interest factor is the most vital factor since students occasionally will listen attentively if the text is interesting. Moreover the text has to be funny, enjoyable since enjoyable text contains their own built-in interest factor.

Lingzhu (2010) states some factors that should be considered by teachers in choosing the authentic materials.

1. Learners’ language proficiency level and linguistics demands of the listening text.
Learners’ level is an important factor in selecting authentic listening materials. Driven in Lingzhu states spontaneously spoken language is too complex to be introduced in the classroom in the first stage of foreign language learning, but in the second or intermediate stage of foreign language learning. All the factors of spontaneously spoken language come into action. So, for the lower level learners, we should provide easier materials such as the short headline type reports, audio and radio advertising, or short news broadcast or children’s songs.
2. Learners’ interest and intrinsic interest of the topic.
Teachers have to think how easy it is to create interest in the topic at a pre-listening stage and how familiar the topic is to the students. Learners’ interest is another important factor that should be considered when selecting authentic listening materials. It is necessary for the teachers to know students’ likes and dislikes on listening materials and it’s wise for them to make a survey among students before the selection.
3. Cultural appropriateness
If there is any cultural specific content in the recording, the teachers should consider whether they can reduce its comprehensibility to the listeners from other cultural backgrounds or whether it can potentially cause cultural offence.

4. Cognitive demands

How complex are the ideas in the recording? How dense are they? How complex are the relationships between the ideas? How complex is the overall argument structure.

5. Exploitability

Can you design any learning tasks based on the text to ensure the learners comprehension? There are other factors need to be considered: the information density, the accent, the speed of the speaker, the relevance of the listening materials to the syllabus and the students.

Based on the ideas stated by the experts above, it cannot be denied that the teachers have to considered some factors in selecting and using authentic listening materials, such as the level of the students, or the age of the students, the interest, the level of the material difficulties, the target of the teaching listening.

Metamoros and Navaro in Amelia (2011) mention that the teachers have to follow some items to apply their authentic materials correctly: (1) the teachers have to consider that the materials should be suitable for the target learners. (2) the teachers have to identify the objective of the lesson as well as the students' ability in order to make the material comprehensible.(3) the teachers have to determine the concept as well as the context of the material (4) the teachers have to make ensure that the authentic materials they are going to use are comprehensible.

Based on the above explanation, it can be stated that there are several consideration that should be done by the teachers before using the authentic material in the classroom.

Applying Authentic Materials in Teaching Listening

Authentic materials have many advantages compared with inauthentic materials, but it does not mean that choosing and using appropriate authentic materials in listening teaching will automatically improve students' listening ability. The students enjoy dealing with authentic material since they enable them to interact with the real language and its use. Martinez (2002) suggests that teachers may use authentic materials for the learners to listen for the gist of the information presented. Matsuta in Tamo (2009) states that using audio-visual materials for aiding students' comprehension is beneficial since it will prevent students from being frustrated about authentic materials. Materials such as popular song will help teachers to create a non-threatening environment because most of the students like listening to the music.

Example 1: The teacher may show the song video to the students such as "Vanilla Twilight" by Owl City. The teaching activities will be preceded by explaining the unfamiliar word found in the song like violet etc. for pre-listening activity. Listening and watching the song video is as Whilst- listening activity. Students can be asked to find the gist or general idea of the song, review the lyric, the message of the song (as the post- listening activity).

Example 2: The cartoon movie "Casper Classic" downloaded from Youtube can be used to teach narrative text. The teaching activities are preceded by showing the cartoon. The students are encouraged to ask questions about the movie. Retelling the movie by using their own words and sentences is the next activity to check the students' understanding about the movie.

Example 3: The video of "No Arms, No Leg, No Worry" taken from Youtube can be used as authentic material for teaching descriptive text (describing people). The video shows the physical appearance of disable person and his ability as well who inspires normal people

C. CONCLUSION

Many experts and researchers have conducted studies about the authentic materials. The English teachers are suggested to use authentic Listening materials in teaching listening. Since those materials can be got and found easily, thus there is no reason for teacher to skip or ignore teaching listening skill for lack of materials. Using authentic listening materials in the classroom has many advantages, because by using authentic materials students are exposed to the real language. The interesting materials like video, songs, can motivate students in learning. However, the authentic materials also have disadvantages. The vocabulary and the structure used may be difficult. Many different accents of the speakers can cause confusion for the students. So, using authentic materials

in the classroom should be suitable with the students' level. This means that teachers should consider some factors in selecting the authentic materials to be used in the classroom.

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