

## ENHANCING STUDENTS' LISTENING SKILL THROUGH VARIOUS LISTENING MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

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### Abstract

Listening skill has been a "Cinderella" for years. Many studies show that many teachers pay no attention to listening skills. They tried to skip teaching listening for many reasons such as lack of teaching materials and teaching facilities. Since internet now is the largest sources of teaching materials, there is no reason for an English teacher to skip teaching listening skill. Listening skill as one of the language skill is needed to be taught, and it needs practice not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom. Differ from the teaching and learning other language skills, the teachers can easily assign students to practice the skills outside the classroom. The teachers do realize that students do not have opportunities to practice their listening skill for the books used are not completed with enough exercises, which the students can practice listening skill at home. Due to the lack of exercises of listening skill found in the listening books, therefore assigning students to practice listening to various listening activities outside the classroom are believed can enhance the students listening ability. The activities are watching English movies and videos, listening to English radio/TV news, TV commercial

**Keywords:** *listening skill, learning material, exercise, movies, news, tv commercoal.*

### Introduction

Living in the global age right now makes people communicate intensely all over the world, not only in the English speaking countries but also to the other countries in the world. People will use English to communicate instead of other foreign languages, even though the people who involved in the communication are not from English speaking countries. Having such communication, the ability to communicate in English is really important. Richards (undated) says that like or not English is language of globalization, international communication, commerce and trade, the media and pop culture and this affect motivation for learning it, so that the English teacher pay more attention to the teaching of listening.

Furthermore he says the teaching of listening has attracted a greater level of interest in recent years than it did in the past. Now, university entrance exams, exit exams, and other examination often include listening component, acknowledging that listening skills are a core components of second-language proficiency (Richard: 2008, p: 1). In Indonesia, since the last ten years listening has been included in the final exam of Senior High School. Meanwhile for the university students, they have to submit their TOEFL® or TOEIC® scores which have listening components.

When the teachers talk about listening, they also have to talk about the material for listening/teaching listening. Learning listening does not only need books but also audio. This is what the teachers complain about because the audio materials are not always available. Sometimes the books are available with the classroom exercises but there is no exercise for homework or assignment. This is quite different from teaching other language skills such as speaking, reading and writing which have exercises done in the classroom and outside the classroom as well. When the teachers have the problem related to audio materials for teaching listening, they tend to skip teaching listening.

Nowadays having the condition above, the teacher can find the teaching materials and exercises or assignment for teaching listening in internet. It cannot be denied that nowadays internet is the largest source of teaching materials including audio materials for teaching listening. Therefore the teachers can get the materials for teaching listening by searching them in internet. Since the internet provides various kinds of listening materials and it is easy for both teachers and students to get the materials, the teachers may assign students to practice listening outside the classroom in order to enhance their listening skill

### Discusion

Listening skill like other language skills needs students to practice a lot, not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom. Practice a lot will make them skillful in this language skill and in turn it will enhance their ability in that skill. But unfortunately the listening text books have very limited material for listening practice. They just have exercises for teaching and learning listening in the classroom, there is no exercises of the book used provide the exercises that can be done by students at home or outside the

classroom. Therefore, to overcome that problem the students need to be “forced” to listen to various listening materials outside the classroom. The teacher may ask them to do listening activities, such as watching movies, listening to the English news, watching video, and listening to radio or TV commercial, known as authentic materials.

### 1. Watching movie.

One of the listening activities done outside the classroom is watching the English movies. People like watching movies because movies are interesting. Many students watch movies outside of class time, but few of them consider this as an opportunity to develop their listening skills (perhaps because they become used to reading the sub-titles of English movies). Hence watching movie is an opportunity to develop their listening skills (Potosi et.al: undated). They can also increase their knowledge in a richer language context. In more specific by watching movies students can learn many things related to the language used by the actors/actresses. They can learn pronunciation, dialect, useful expressions, and moral value of the movie. This is in line with the ideas stated by Norris in Adnan (2014:3). He states that teachers need to design activities to facilitate the practice of the listening skills, based on students’ knowledge about the characteristics of the informal oral English language, in order to help students succeed in their learning. To “force” students to watch the movie, they have to be assigned to do something related to the movie they watch. The teacher may assign them to write the report of the movie. It can be about the synopsis, the genre of the movie, the characters, the changing of the character, the useful expressions found in the movie and their meanings and the moral value as well. This assignment should be presented in the listening class, to make them work seriously.

In writing the report of the movie the students need to watch the movie many times, in order to understand the movie before they make their assignment. Writing the synopsis of two- hours movie into seventy five up to eighty words needs comprehension and understanding. In addition finding the useful expressions and their meanings also needs understanding because different context will cause different meaning of the language used. These kinds of assignment need the students to watch the movie and listen to the dialogs found in the movie for several times, unless they are not able to do the assignment.

Movies can be good authentic learning materials for listening skill, because they contain dialogues from highly proficient English speakers, which could contribute to an easier understanding of their pronunciation. Movies allow students to access to more information in listening. That is, the learners can listen and see what is happening at the same time (Potosi: undated). According to Gallacher in Potosi cited by Adnan (2014) “A good idea is to choose scenes that are very visual. The more visual the video is, the easier it is to understand – as long as the pictures illustrate what is being said”. Selected English TV series, movies, advertising, could increase student’s motivations as Van Duzer (1998) claims that students listen to relevant and interesting things for them which keep their motivation and attention high. Furthermore he claims that movies provide real situation, intonation and real pronunciation and allows students to a real context. Miller (2003) says that non-verbal behavior or paralinguistic features of the spoken text are now available for the learners, so the learner can develop their listening skills in a richer context. It is because of the movies contain a lot of setting, dialogues, meaningful expressions, wide range of vocabularies, phrases, and also sentences. In addition movies also have correct pronunciation, since it is stared or dubbed by native speakers.

The previous ideas are in line with Porcel (2010) ideas. She states that the students can benefit a lot from watching films in English. They can improve their listening and speaking skills, they can enlarge their vocabulary knowledge and they can make their pronunciation and intonation better. Furthermore, she says that using movies in English class has been one of the most rewarding experiences she has ever had.

According to Flowerdew and Miller (2005) general viewing of videos can be exploited. Learners can be encouraged to employ their extensive listening skills by having group in or out the class after watching a particular movie. In addition, generic worksheets may be developed to help those students who would like to focus more attention when watching movies. He suggests the students to use the worksheet form to help them focus on their attention in watching movies to employ their listening skill. The teacher may create and provide the worksheet.

Student’s work sheet

Name of movie: _____			
Kind of movies: comedy/ drama/ horror/ action/ science fiction/ other.			
Names of main characters in the movie:			
Male	Female	Animal	Others
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
Setting: Where does the movie take place?			

What is the main theme of the movie?

(a) Relationship (b) Religion, (c) Politics, (d) Love, (e) Survival (f) Others

Write the summary around 75 words to express how you felt while watching this movie.

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Write five useful expressions and their meanings.

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What is the moral value of the movie?

Adapted from: Flowerdew (2005)

By doing this movie report the students will get familiar with the spoken language. In turn it will enhance their listening ability.

## 2. Watching (non movie) video

Non movie video is another kind of listening teaching materials that can be found in internet. It is easy for the teachers to find the materials from internet, whether audio or audio visual. YouTube, for instance, provides many kinds of listening materials. One of the materials the teacher may download is non movie videos. Non movie videos which is meant here is the videos available in internet that discuss or explain something or certain topics. The categories of videos that can be downloaded are technology, science, culture, art, sport, tourism, education, animal, et cetera. For example videos of Niagara Falls, Street Art-London 2012, Light Pollution, Managing Stress, The advantages of Drinking Coffee and Paradise are all available on You Tube. Gallacher in Adnan (2014) says that a good idea is to choose scenes that are very visual. The more visual a video is, the easier it is to understand-as long as the pictures illustrate what is being said. Consequently, the teachers should make a very good selection of video materials to expose learners to suitable materials that facilitate their learning. In addition, video materials adequately chosen, can promote the integration of language skills, and change the class routines as Hinkel stated in Gonzales, (2006).

Even though You Tube provides many kinds of video, not all of the videos can be used as teaching materials, therefore the teacher has to instruct clearly to avoid misunderstanding of the students. The teacher has to say the criteria of the video that the students may watch. The criteria such as the topic or the subject, the speed of the speakers, the length of video should be considered in accordance with their level.

Watching non movie videos actually is not as interesting as watching movie video, since they do not perform stories and famous actors like movie video have. In addition there are no sub-titles they can read while watching the video. Instead they are just designed to explain, discuss, inform and introduce something to the internet users. Mostly they deal with science, technology and knowledge. However it is a challenge for both teacher and students to design and do the assignment of this kind of video.

Since watching non movie video is done outside the class, the teacher then ask students to record the video and present the result of their listening activities into the class. The presentation can be about the content of the video and the students' mind mapping of it. The following example is taken from student's (Redha) work. It is about the typescript and mind mapping of the video "How to Detect a Lie"

### HOW to DETECT a LIE

To detect lie we need: good ear, good eyes, and healthy skepticism. Here are the steps on detecting lie:  
Step 1: Watch the suspected liar hands. Body language study shows that people tend to touch their face and scratch their nose when they lie (excessive face touching).

Step 2: Follow their eyes. Liars tend to blink a lot and don't maintain eye contact (erratic eye behavior).

Step 3: Note their works. A liar will often skip contraction, and avoid pronoun using someone full name instead he or she (unnatural speech).

Step 4: Check their smile. People who are telling the truth use many facial maces, but liar just the mouth (creepy half smiling).

Step 5: Notice their posture. Liars tend to keep their body closed by folding their arms for example (defensive positioning).

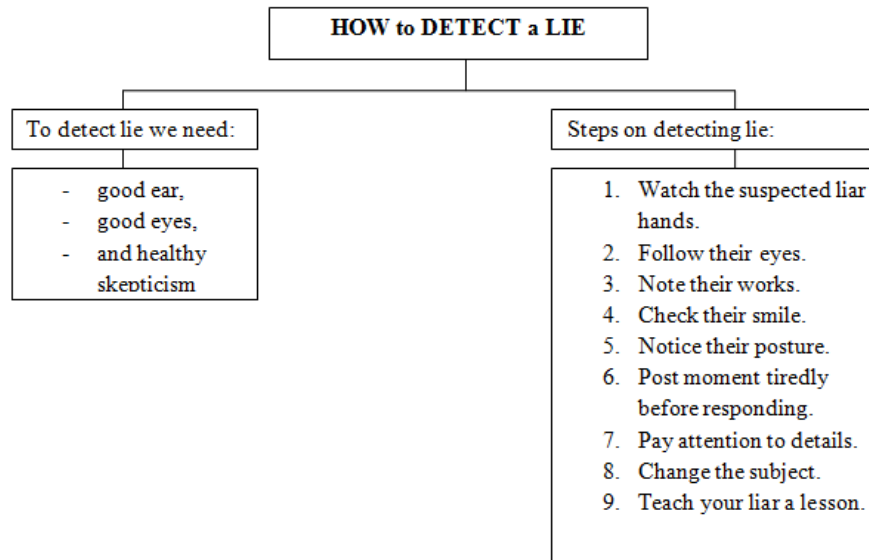
Step 6: Post moment tiredly before responding. If the silence makes them uncomfortable, they maybe lying (pause-induced discomfort).

Step 7: Pay attention to details. If they provide more information than the necessary, that's the bad sign. People tend to be overtly specific when they're making something out (hyper-specific fabricating).

Step 8: Change the subject. If they seem relieve that's probably red flag, they've been lying straight your face (dropped topic elation).

Step 9: What you do from here is up to you. Better to teach your liar a lesson.

91% of Americans report lying on regular basis.



By doing the assignment like the above example, it will give opportunities and responsibilities for students to practice listening a lot, inside and outside the classroom.

### 3. Listening to English News.

English news is another source of listening materials, whether radio or TV news. However there is no doubt that listening to the radio news is a much greater challenge for the learner, especially at lower levels. TV news on the other hand, provides visuals which give the learners clues to what is being said (Basquille; undated), so that choosing the TV news for listening practice will be more interesting for students. By listening to the English news, students can learn various dialects of English. Since many TV stations provide English news programs therefore many English dialects can be learned. The TV/radio channels like CNN, Al Jazeera, ABC, BBC, and NHK are all sources for listening materials. Based on the countries where the TVs are located, the dialect of American English, British English, Japanese English, Australian English and Arabic English can be listened. All of them can enrich students' knowledge about English dialects.

Related to listening to TV news the students can be assigned to write the typescript of the news. This kind of assignment needs students to write the typescript of the news as it is. They have to listen to the news and write every single word said by the news reader. The teachers should remind the students the characteristics of radio /TV news that the newsreader is likely to speak at a reasonable pace, enunciate clearly and to have an accent which is not very strong. According to Hutchison in Liza (2013) the news reader delivers 25 words a minute with a wide range of vocabularies. When s/he reads the news faster, it is a normal speed for the news, but for the listener, it seems like very difficult to understand the news. Therefore if students just listen to the news once, it will cause difficulties. So, the students need to listen to the news more than once. Besides writing the typescript of the news, they can also be asked to make the mind mapping of the news and answering the five WHs+How questions (what, who, where, when, why and how). Even though it is difficult to understand the news but it can be a challenge for students to write the typescript of the news. By 'forcing' them to listen and watch the news, it will give them many benefits such as enriching their vocabularies, understanding various dialect of English, improving their pronunciation, getting familiar with note taking, and the process of listening; top down.

In writing the typescript the listeners also have to pay attention to the homonym or (the word with similar pronunciation but different meaning). It needs students to understand the context of the news, because the incorrect comprehension will cause the wrong meaning. For example when the news reader reads "the UN general secretary ..." it will be written by the student into "then you and general secretary ...." That sentence changes the meaning of the news. This is in line with what Underwood (1989) has identified as (1) lack of control over the speed at which speakers speak, (2) not being able to get things repeated, (3) the listener's

limited vocabularies, (4) failure to recognize the 'signals' (5) problems of interpretation, (6) inability to concentrate and (6) established learning habits.

Even though students have difficulties in doing this assignment, the focus of this is to provide them with the opportunities to practice listening especially for the intermediate level of students. Before assigning them, the teachers may provide them with the skills of listening such as predicting, note taking. The following work is taken from student's work

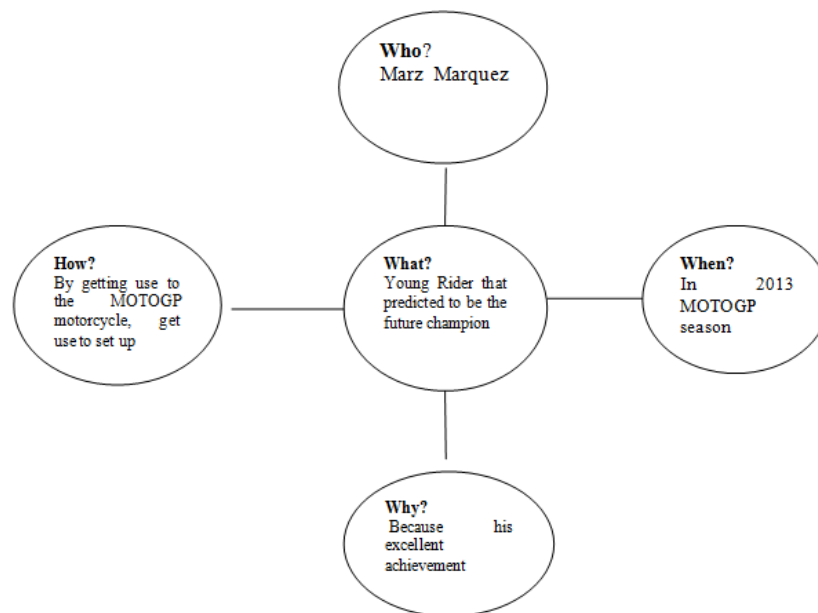
#### **Marquez The future Champion**

*This is the Autodromo da Estoril in Portugal and this is Marc Marquez. Marc, he doesn't usually ride around the track on a moped. This is more he is staying. Marquez was recently signed by Honda to race in the Two Thousand and Thirteen MotoGP World Championship. An excellent achievement for a nineteen years old, but Marquez is taking it in his stride.*

*You'll never know how the future is going to turn out, but I hope that I'll be competing for many years to come because I'm passionate about racing. It's just something I've really enjoyed. I struggle for I was ..... on bike, and everything that goes with the racing life. We have to see what the future holds, but I plan to keep on racing until they tell me "get out, you're not good enough anymore".*

*Marquez has let his life on a bike, the Spaniard made it since in the one hundred and twenty five CC World Championships in the Two Thousand and Eight, aged he was fifteen. And Marquez won the World Championship in his second season that it will be a big step up to perform well at the elite level. Only to perform well in pre-season testing round not to think, I need to learn more about the MotoGP class, get used to motorcycle and the use set up, you know take it from there and see where we are. Marquez has big shoes to fill following two times World Champion Casey Stoner's retirement. But the new comer will be out to surprise MotoGP fans at the opening grand prix in Qatar on April at seventh.*

The mind mapping of the text above is like the following:



#### **4. Listening to TV commercial**

Watching TV is the activity done by most people all over the world. It is not only watched at home but also in some other places like in the office, bank, hotel, and airport. During the program broadcasted the viewers are also served with TV commercials. Some listening books include radio commercial (advertisement) in their exercises, but having TV commercial (authentic material) as a part of assignment also has challenges. Tuzi and Mori (2008) state that TV commercials which last for 45 second sound and video bytes offer teachers a tool to teach not only language, but also culture and critical thinking.

Using TV commercials in the ESL classroom brings a number of benefits to language teachers. First of all, TV commercials are short (typically lasting 30 to 50 seconds). Their size is ideal for new language learners (Davis, and Erkaya, in Tuzi 2008). They are not so long as to drown the students in material like TV shows or movies do. In addition he says that commercials are focused, and thematic in content. In many cases commercials possess some advantages over their video counterparts: (a) attention is directed at entire encapsulated and free standing message which can be presented, manipulated and digested in less than one

lesson; (b) students tend to stay on task longer and see a clear start and finish to the activity because of the concise aim and succinct duration of commercials, and (c) commercials can be easily tied to themes of any text to introduce, review or wrap up the lesson, because they introduce one main concept including topics ranging from sport, cars, restaurant to AIDS and environmental concerns such as global warming. Furthermore he says that commercials contain both visual verbal and written images. It also bombard listeners with key words and slogan that are often repeated over and over to the beat of some catchy tune or jingle that stays imprinted on students' mind for days, (Rawley and Smith: in Randall; undated)

Their brevities also make them easier to select. Finding a good TV or movie segment generally requires more preparation and setup in order to be used. TV commercials are easier to select, manipulate and prepare because of their length. TV commercials are also catchy and designed to be entertaining (Smith & Rawley, in Tuzi 2008). How many times have you found yourself repeating a song or phrase from a TV commercial?

Another great blessing is that commercials contain authentic content (Smith & Rawley, 1997) they are written for native speakers and spoken in authentic English, and not just the native speakers from one culture; TV commercials are created in many different English speaking countries making it possible for students to have exposure to a variety of English. Thus, by using TV commercials from a variety of different locations including the UK, USA, Australia, etc., language teachers can introduce different accents, dialects, and indeed different English, and thereby allow their students to expand the reach of their listening abilities. Another advantage is the variety of voices that TV commercials can provide for outnumber typical listening materials in listening text books. Television commercials can provide a treasure trove of language learning opportunities. The materials are easily accessible and many times are free to use in classes. They not only provide jumping off points to learning discrete linguistic and lexical elements, but also provide an avenue to exploring culture and values.

An additional benefit is the visual elements of TV commercials that further enhance the ability of students to understand a commercial's meaning. A number of studies suggest that students who are exposed to commercials improve their listening skills and augment their motivation to learn (Davis, and Lee in Tuzi 2008). The visual clues of a TV commercial provide scaffolding for students to assist them to understand the linguistic meanings in the commercial. At the same time, teachers can use the original intent of the commercial and the cultural elements contained there into teach critical thinking and culture (McGee and Fujita, 2000). In any teaching context, it is crucial that the curriculum teachers used is based on clear and specific goals so that they can appropriately find materials, methods, and forms of assessment (Richards in Tuzi 2008).

The learning activities the teachers can do are asking students to find the answer of the questions which have been provided on the work sheet. They are the questions of:

- What's the product? \_\_\_\_\_
- What is the slogan of the product? \_\_\_\_\_
- What adjectives are used in that product? \_\_\_\_\_
- Is there any cultural aspect in that product? \_\_\_\_\_
- Is the product advertised through a story? \_\_\_\_\_
- What is the story about? \_\_\_\_\_

Those questions will lead the students to think critically. Even though they look simple questions but they need understanding in doing the assignment.

## Conclusion

To enhance students' listening skill teachers may ask students to do various listening activities outside the classroom since the exercises for listening outside the classroom are not provided by the listening text books. Nowadays internet has become the largest source of listening materials. Therefore the teachers can use it as a media for students to practice listening skill. The activities of watching movies, watching non movies video, listening to the English news (radio or TV) and watching and listening to (TV) commercials are examples of the listening activities. The teacher then may provide the students with the work sheet that should be presented in the listening class. When these activities done continuously, it is believed that the students' listening ability can be enhanced.

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