

## THE USE OF AUTHENTIC MATERIALS IN EFL LISTENING CLASSROOMS: STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES

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### **Abstract**

Improving listening skills is necessary for students to develop their ability in comprehending the spoken information. This paper explores the use of authentic materials in a listening course in English as Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms and students' perception toward it. The data were collected from open-ended questionnaire distributed to the participants of the study asking about their experiences during the course. The data were analyzed qualitatively to identify the themes within the data. This study reveals students various perceptions toward the use of authentic materials: stimulating motivation, raising cultural awareness, facilitating learner's interest, giving real exposure, giving exposure to contextual use of language, boosting confidence and experience to the real language, and coping with non-linguistics element.

**Keywords:** Authentic Materials, student perception, English Language Teaching

### **INTRODUCTION**

Listening is one of the most frequently used forms of language skill which plays a significant role in daily communication. Comprehensive listening functions as a main key for learning. Despite the importance of listening skill in language instruction, many students still find difficulty in understanding native language use. Listening may be only taught as a subject only used inside the classroom, not outside the classroom. Moreover, the real use of language in a country where English is a foreign language is rarely found. The students, therefore, are not accustomed to hearing the language as it is produced by native speakers

for native speakers. Consequently, they have great difficulty understanding English spoken when they come into contact with native speakers of the language (Ghaderpanahi, 2012).

Students trouble in understanding spoken language outside of the classroom may be the result of the listening materials which are quite different from the language of the real world. For this reason, student' exposure to the real life situations must be the concern of English language teaching in EFL classroom. Students need to be able to cope with the same kinds of language encountered by native

speakers of the target language. Preparing students to the material of real language use will, therefore, enable them to cope with genuine interaction. Such form of teaching materials is called authentic materials.

Authentic materials denote to the language materials used in the daily life of native speakers. According to Nunan (1999) authentic material is spoken or written data produced in real life communication. In line with Nunan (1999), Ahmed (2017) assumes that authentic materials sometimes called authentic or contextualized, real-life materials that can be seen in everyday life. Authentic materials can be found in television, magazines, newspapers, advertisements, etc. The materials, therefore, help learners realize the relationship between the language presented in the classroom and the language used in real world situations (Al Azri, R.H. & Al-Rashdi, M.H., 2014).

### **The Purpose of Using Authentic Materials**

Authentic materials strengthen the connection between the language studied in the classroom and the outside world. Gebhard (1996) gives an example when lessons are centered on comprehending a menu or a TV weather report, students tend to focus more on content and meaning rather than on the language itself. This offers students a valuable source of language input, so that they are not just being exposed only to the

language presented by the text and the teacher. It exemplifies the use of authentic material in assisting students' learning processes. When authentic materials are used with the purpose of students' learning, students will have a sense of the real language for communication is being learnt, as opposed to classroom language itself (Al Azri & Al-Rashdi, 2014). According to Richards (2001) there are several reasons for using authentic materials in the classroom; they prepare learners for real life, they meet learners' needs, they affect learners' motivation positively, they encourage teachers to adopt effective teaching methods and they present authentic information about culture.

### **Types of Authentic Materials:**

Teaching materials are a very essential part of teaching and learning a foreign language. Because of the development of technology, teaching materials resources are available and easy to access. The internet is considered as one of the very important and rich sources for authentic materials. Genhard (1996) in Arianie, M. (2017) classified authentic materials into three categories as follows:

1. Authentic listening materials, such as radio news, cartoons, songs, etc.
2. Authentic visual materials, such as street signs, magazines and newspapers pictures, post cards, etc.
3. Authentic printed materials, such as sports reports, newspapers,

restaurant menus, train tickets, etc.

## **METHOD**

This study is conducted to explain the use of authentic materials in English classroom and students' perception towards the use of it. Perception needs to be presented comprehensively in order to get thorough explanations of the real condition. The participants of this research are 11 students in the fourth semester enrolled in a listening course. They were asked open-ended questionnaire as well as probing questions to share their thoughts during the course. The data are coded and analyzed descriptively and qualitatively to describe students' perception toward the use of authentic materials in EFL listening classroom.

In the course, the students were asked to visit [www.ello.org](http://www.ello.org) to get more exposure to different types of authentic materials at their convenient times. It was done to bring into the student's own samples of authentic language data from the real-world context. Based on its website, it is stated that ELLLO provides lessons containing MP3 files and videos of an authentic conversation with a transcript for each conversation, vocabulary support, and a comprehension quiz. It also provides a word list extracted from the audio transcript.

Students were asked to write down new words and looked for the meaning in a dictionary. Then, they had to write the sentence in the transcript with the new words.

In the listening activity, the students were provided with an

outline of the material content. The students listened to the materials with the transcript. They were required to take notes of the information following the outline provided. The materials were played a few times by the students to get particular details of ideas of the content. When the session was completed, the students discussed their findings of information, and in small groups, they make summary relating the materials.

After listening activity, the students wrote their evaluation of the materials according to the following points: answer the question provided by ELLLO, write the benefits of the materials for their language skills development, write comment on the content, and write what they learned from the material.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### **Stimulating Motivation**

The use of use of authentic materials is perceived to be able to stimulate student motivation in learning English. This is based on the statement of a respondent that "*The materials provided in ELLLO are motivating, interesting, and enjoyable because the content is not too serious*" (R2). The statement means that students get interest, curiosity, attention, optimism, and passion during the learning activity. Sari (2016) believes that the use of authentic material is beneficial for learners for increasing their motivation so it needs to be considered by English teachers in the ELT classroom. Little and Singleton

(1991) assume that authentic materials are more enjoyable for learners, who consequently feel more motivated as they are brought closer to the target language culture. The students may also feel that they learn the real language, which is exactly the language they need to interact and communicate with in the real world. Therefore, it is very important for students to be motivated in order to succeed in learning the target language. Unlike the created materials, authentic materials are basically more active, interesting and stimulating.

#### **Raising Cultural Awareness**

Student perceived that the use of use of authentic materials provide information about culture. This is based on the statement of a respondent that *"I was not only focusing on the language use but also learn how the language is applied in certain social situation."* Authentic materials expose learners to the cultures of target language and at the same time preparing them for interactions with native speakers. They provide situational language and the exposure is to the real discourse. The materials are not only interesting but also very helpful in developing social language skills. Authentic materials also consider the context of culture instead of just looking at how language is used.

#### **Facilitating Learner's Interest**

The use of authentic material is believed to be fun for learners. Authentic materials are more up to date and can therefore make the

learners more interested because they refer to current events that offer interest to the learners. One of the respondents assumes *"I can choose interesting materials to learn English so I always choose my favorite topics."* (R5). Authentic materials permit students' interests into the classroom. Authentic materials include everything into the classroom. These kinds of fun materials take student attention and engagement in the learning activity. Peacock (1997) emphasizes that when learners used authentic materials for learning, overall class interest increased significantly.

#### **Giving Real Exposure**

Through authentic materials, learners get exposure to real English, not an artificial one. *I can learn the language features that are not found in the usual materials"* (R8). Authentic materials give students exposure to unregulated language. They are exposed to the actual language used by native speakers when communicating with other native speakers. The learners are given a real illustration speech for example hesitation, false starts and mistakes. Learners therefore are introduced to the real life speech when they meet it in other situation. The learners will also have the chance to listen to authentic materials with different various accents. The use of authentic materials offers students the opportunity to expose to materials

which are produced for real life contexts. Hwang (2005: 56) states that by using authentic materials, students are encouraged to use the vocabulary and expressions in those materials for their own production of English.

### **Giving Exposure to Contextual Use of Language**

Authentic materials expose students to the target language in context. Compared to grammar drills or traditional vocabulary learning, authentic materials communicate meaning and associations in real life setting. *“From authentic materials I can learn how to say particular expression based on the particular context”* (R7). The focus is on the message and means and context that are often used to help communicate. Authentic materials provide learners with alternatives to learn real English usage by providing information of real life situations and make the learners aware of these situations. Student ability of interpretation develop because the goal is to understand and use English in real life. Therefore, using authentic resources will teach the students what they need to know.

### **Boosting Confidence and Experience to the Real Language**

Authentic materials boost student's confidence and experience to the real language. *“I am now confident in using different style of language expression”* (R9). By using authentic materials, students encounter words

and constructions that they would probably never see in non-authentic materials. This is in line with Peacock (1997) that students may learn abbreviations when looking and handwritten notes, and hear the true tone and encounter filler of native speakers when listening. He adds that authentic materials contain various text types and language styles. In the real conversation, speakers use abbreviations, filler sounds such as “ummm”, “uhhh”, “mmmm” and filler words such as “like”, “you know” which are essentially meaningless words and are used when they are speaking English. Learners will meet these in authentic material.

### **Coping with Non-Linguistics**

#### **Element**

Students perceive that authentic materials train them to cope with non-linguistic elements. This is based on the statement of a respondent that *“Authentic materials have [background] noise so I need to be more concentrated. I also learn the native gesture when expressing something”* (R3). Non-linguistics such as vocal elements: pitch, volume, and rate, and non-vocal elements, which are usually referred to as body language and include gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact, among other things are part of authentic materials. If listening to authentic materials, students are familiar with and able to filter out the background noises. They need to concentrate to understand the talk over one another. It meant that

authentic materials are more challenging than clear created material recordings. Authentic materials give a taste of what is really out there.

## CONCLUSION

The results show that authentic materials have a positive effect on stimulating motivation, raising cultural awareness, facilitating learner's interest, giving real exposure, giving exposure to contextual use of language, boosting confidence and experience to the real language, and coping with non-linguistics element. Authentic materials enable the gap between the language used in the classroom and the language used in real life by bringing familiar linguistic situations and materials right into the EFL classroom.

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