



**KELEBIHAN DAN KEKURANGAN PENGGUNAAN MATERI OTENTIK DALAM
PENGAJARAN KEMAMPUAN MENDENGARKAN SISWA**

**(STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF USING AUTHENTIC MATERIALS
IN TEACHING LISTENING COMPREHENSION)**

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Abstract

Listening is not a passive skill. It is an active process since it needs the interpretation of sounds into meaning. It is important for teachers to help their students to increase the students' listening comprehension. This paper discusses the teaching listening comprehension using authentic materials. Authentic materials are the materials that have been produced by native speakers in the form of written or spoken language. There are strengths and weaknesses in applying these materials. Some of the strengths are more interesting, genuine, and motivating than non-authentic materials. On the other hand, the authentic materials are too difficult for lower level students so the teacher needs to spend more hours to apply them. Finally, in teaching listening comprehension the teacher needs to select the appropriate materials to meet the students' level and knowledge background and most of all it must be suitable with the syllabus of teaching objectives.

Keywords: *Authentic Materials, Strengths, Weaknesses, Listening Comprehension*

Abstract

Mendengarkan bukanlah keterampilan pasif. Mendengarkan merupakan proses aktif karena membutuhkan interpretasi suara menjadi makna. Penting bagi guru untuk membantu para siswa dalam meningkatkan kemampuan mendengarkan mereka. Tulisan ini membahas penggunaan materi otentik dalam pengajaran kemampuan mendengarkan siswa. Materi otentik adalah materi yang telah diproduksi oleh penutur asli dalam bentuk bahasa tertulis maupun lisan. Ada kelebihan dan kekurangan dalam mengaplikasikan materi ini. Beberapa kelebihan di antaranya materi otentik ini lebih menarik, asli, dan memotivasi daripada materi yang tidak otentik. Namun di sisi lain, materi otentik dianggap terlalu sulit bagi siswa dengan tingkat pemahaman yang rendah sehingga guru perlu menghabiskan lebih banyak waktu untuk menerapkannya. Pada akhirnya, dalam mengajarkan kemampuan mendengarkan bagi para siswa, guru perlu menyeleksi materi yang sesuai untuk memenuhi tingkat dan latar belakang pengetahuan siswa serta yang paling penting harus sesuai dengan silabus dan tujuan pengajaran.

Kata kunci: *Materi Otentik, Kelebihan, Kekurangan, Pemahaman Mendengarkan*

INTRODUCTION

In English subject, there are four language skills that should be mastered by students to accomplish the basic language communication skills namely; listening, speaking, reading, and writing. All of the skills should be practiced by the students, which cannot be separated from one another if one expects to be able to communicate freely in English.

The increased emphasis on direct communication today in the foreign language, listening has become an object of growing attention (Valette: 1977). It is, in fact, possible for two persons of different linguistic backgrounds to carry out a productive conversation with his or her own language while understanding what the other is saying in the second language. Besides, in service occupation such as medicine, law enforcement, or social work, a person can become much more effective if he or she readily understands the language or languages of the local minority groups, even if that person's speaking command is less developed than his or her listening comprehension. Furthermore, the first experience that students acquire by the time they were born was much influenced by listening. So, it is important for English teacher to help students to develop their listening skill in learning English. Thus, helping students to develop their listening skill besides reading, writing, and speaking is one of the language teacher's important duties.

The curriculum justify the materials that can be used for teaching language skills; namely the material which is commonly chosen from the textbooks or published material, a type of material made for native speakers or English used in the classroom in a way similar to the one it was made for.

The materials can be taken from radio, TV programs, or recording materials. Since the curriculum suggested using authentic materials for teaching language skills, therefore, it is important for English teachers to explore the materials used in English classroom by applying authentic materials for teaching listening skill since listening is as much important as other language skills. Larsen and Freeman (1998) state that it is considered desirable to give students an opportunity to develop strategies for understanding language as it is actually used by native speakers. So, it is important for teachers to provide the teaching of listening with authentic listening materials, since they are real examples of thing that native speaker listen to.

In reality, some English teachers at schools only provide non-authentic listening materials. Most of materials used by the teachers are only short passages from school's textbook, and the teacher does not vary the activities. The students are only asked to answer some questions related to the text being read by the teacher or rewrite the sentence after they heard it. It seemed the teaching learning activities become less effective, uninteresting, boring, and not enjoyable, and most of all it does not help the students to improve their ability to use the language communicatively. This is seen from the students' response when they do not follow the teacher's instruction seriously, and they feel bored. Moreover, the students are not given the chances to listen to spoken English. The students are required to pay more attention on reading activities since the English test that the students have at school are emphasized more on reading comprehension.

Assisting learners in the development of listening comprehension is a

challenge for teacher. It demands both the teacher's and learner's attention because of the critical role that listening plays not only in communication but also in the acquisition of language. Knowledge of the listening process and factors that affect listening enable teachers to select or create listening materials and activities that meet the needs of their learners.

Listening Comprehension The Definition of Listening Comprehension

Listening has often been called a passive skill. This is misleading, because listening demands active involvement from the listeners. As Rost (1991: 21) states that *"listening is an active process requiring participation on the part of the listener."* Thus, listening does not mean just sitting quietly while another person does the speaking. It means that the listeners must interact with the incoming information in order to obtain meaning. In other words, they do not only receive and record but also process and interpret what they hear. So, listening is more than simply hearing or perceiving aural input. It is the interpretation sounds into meaning.

The definition of listening according to Morrow and Johnson (1998: 79) *"listening refers to the ability to understand how a particular sentence relates to what else has been said and its function in the communication."* While Underwood (1996: 1) states that *"... listening is the activity of paying attention to and trying to get meaning from something we hear."*

The definitions above explain that listening is an action which requires effort and attention to capture the meaning from what we hear. It is explained that listening is the ability to understand the relationship between sentences being said and its role in the communication. To listen successfully to spoken English, we need to be able to work

out what speakers mean when they use particular ways on particular occasions, and simply understand the words themselves. In other words, to listen effectively, we need to understand the speakers' intention when they apply certain words in certain situations. So, while listening, the listeners are required to be able to listen to the information carefully to get the message being spoken by the speakers.

In order to get the meaning intended by the speaker, listeners have to use strategies for comprehension; Chamot (1995: 55) proposed three categories of listening strategies. (1) *Cognitive strategies*. They are used to process, interpret, store and recall the information. They involve inference, elaboration, prediction, visualization, and reconstruction. (2) *Metacognitive strategies*. They are used to manage and facilitate mental process, cope with difficulties during listening. They involve pre-listening preparation, selective attention, directed attention, comprehension monitoring, and comprehension evaluation. (3) *Social affective-strategies*. They are used to enlist the help of others to facilitate comprehension and manage one's emotion when listening. They involve cooperation and confidence building.

In listening comprehension activity, the listener often gets little information, or even does not understand what the speaker is saying. According to Krashen (1998: 75) it happens because the listener is trying to understand all the words he hears. He says that most adults expect to understand a new language by learning the meaning of every word they hear. Similarly Rost (1991: 21) states that there are some reasons why it happens: poor understanding results when listeners do not pay attention, listeners may experience a lapse of attention for variety of reasons; they may lose interest in the topic or the activity; they cannot keep up with what is going on; they have lost track of

goals for listening; or they are thinking too much about their own response instead of concentrating on what is being said.

Based on the above theories it can be concluded that the listeners' attention and concentration toward what is being heard are important things in listening process. Without full concentration it is impossible for the listeners to follow the listening texts, understand the content, and give acceptable answers. Because of the listeners' active participation, then some experts state that listening is an active receptive process.

Meaning takes a significant part in listening comprehension. Listeners will try to understand the meaning of the information/message communicated by the speaker. The messages which are communicated involve both verbal and non-verbal aspects of the language. Feyten (1991: 176) points out that "listening involves not only the ears, but also an analysis of the paralinguistic and verbal messages. Gaining knowledge from other aspects of non-verbal transmission is also involved." Anderson and Lynch (1988: 58) agree with Feyten by explaining that "listening is not simply an aural activity and that successful comprehension involves the exploitation of all possible sources of useful information."

Supporting the two theories above, Littlewood (1998: 67) argues that "the nature of listening comprehension means that the learner should be encouraged to engage in an active process of listening for meanings, using not only the linguistic cues but also his or her non-linguistic knowledge." It is clear that meaning can be understood or comprehended through interpreting the words spoken, which represent the linguistic aspects; through the tone of voice, pitch, intonation, stress, and other paralinguistic features; and, finally, through non-verbal aspect such as body language. Furthermore, students, as

listeners, should be made aware that not every clue, in this case word, is equally important to the message. Therefore, when they miss a piece of language, they do not need to be panic since there is a good chance that other clues will enable them to understand the message. As Littlewood suggests that "the criterion for success in listening is not whether he (student, as a listener) has understood every word, but whether he has constructed enough of the meanings in order to satisfy his own communicative purpose."

Factors in Listening Process

Listening is a demanding process, not only because of the complexity of the process itself but also due to the factors that characterize the listener, the speaker, the content of the message, and any visual support that accompanies the message (Brown and Yule: 1983)

The listener

Interest in a topic increases the listener's comprehension; the listeners may avoid the topic that is not interesting for them. A listener who is an active participant in a conversation generally has more understanding of the topic being discussed than a listener who is listening to a conversation on recorded materials. Furthermore, the ability to use negotiation skills, such as asking for clarification, repetition or definition of points that he does not understand, enables a listener to make sense if the incoming information.

The speaker

Idiomatic language and reduced forms make comprehension more difficult. The extent to which the speaker uses these language forms has an impact in listeners' comprehension. The more exposure the listener has to them, the greater his ability to comprehend. A speaker's rate of delivery may be too fast, too slow, or has too many hesitations for a listener to follow.

The content

The content that is familiar is easier to comprehend than the content with unfamiliar vocabulary or which the listener has insufficient background knowledge.

Visual support

Visual support, such as video, pictures, diagrams, gestures, facial expressions, and body language, can increase comprehension if the learner is able to interpret it correctly.

Aspects Dealing with Listening Process

According to Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000: 102), there are two aspects dealing with listening process. They are:

a. Top-down listening aspect

This aspect contains:

- Schematic knowledge that consists of content schemata that is the background knowledge of the topic and formal schemata which includes the knowledge of how the discourse is organized by looking at different genres, topics, and purposes.
- Contextual knowledge that involves the understanding of the particular listening situation on its context. For example, the listeners estimate about who the participants are, what the setting is and what the topic and the purposes are.

b. Bottom-up listening aspect

This aspect includes the knowledge about the language system, such as the knowledge about the grammar, vocabulary, and phonological system.

Difficulties Faced by the Students in Listening Comprehension

Listening, mostly, is considered as the most difficult skill in learning English because to get the main idea or the

message conveyed in a speech, we have to pay more attention to catch the idea. Ur (2001: 111) states some difficulties faced by the students in the classroom when they were having listening activity, which are:

- 1) It is difficult for the students to catch what the speaker says about.
- 2) Students feel that they have to understand every word said by the speakers.
- 3) Students find it difficult to catch the meaning when the speakers use the normal speed.
- 4) It is not enough to hear the speech just once.
- 5) It is hard for the students to keep up with all the information that they get.
- 6) When the listening activity requires longer texts, the students will get bored of it and that will make them lose their concentration.

To handle the problems that occur in the process of listening, Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000: 103) suggest the strategies in teaching listening, as follows:

- 1) Make the students aware of the need of using this strategy.
- 2) To create the students' background knowledge, use the pre-listening activities as the warm-up.
- 3) Tell the students about the learning purpose.
- 4) Use the real data that focuses on meaning and content.
- 5) Provide guide for listening activities.
- 6) Let the students do the self-evaluation so they can evaluate how accurate their listening is.

Authentic Materials

Definition of Authentic Material

There are some definitions of authentic material based on some experts. According to Haines, authentic material is defined as: "written or spoken language

which has been produced by native speakers, rather than for foreign language learners. The materials that can be applied such as newspaper articles, tourist information leaflets, radio programs and “real life” conversation”. It is supported by Widdowson (as cited in Martinez: 2006) who states that “authentic material is a kind of material that is designed for native speakers of English used in the classroom in a way similar to the one it was designed for, the example of the material would be a radio news report.”

According to Harmer authentic texts (either written or spoken) are the materials design for native speakers: they are real texts designed not for language students, but for the speakers of the language itself.”

The Use of Authentic Materials for Teaching English Listening Comprehension

The English foreign learners need to acquire authentic materials for listening lesson, they should be allowed to listen to materials that is authentic, which is interested to them, and of which they are familiar with. When students know what to listen for, they are able to perceive and understand the materials better (Nuna and Miller: 1995). It is supported by Wong et.al (1995: 318) who say that when teacher uses authentic materials the students may find it easier to relate to the events of their own experience or knowledge and be able to appreciate the use of language in these materials.

Peacock recommends “teachers of adult EFL to beginners try to appropriate authentic materials in their classroom, as they may increase their learners’ levels of on-task behavior, concentration, and involvement in the target activity more than textbook materials.” Similarly Dumitrescu states that authentic material, when appropriately selected and implemented, can be used to develop tasks that depart from

formulaic language learning and provide a bridge between the linguistic skills of learners and their professional knowledge goals.

English teachers need to apply authentic materials either written or spoken in order to maintain students’ learning experience and to keep the student informed of what is happening to the outside world. Since it is necessary for teacher to apply authentic materials in listening lesson, it is also important to get natural responds from the students in using the materials because the students will have various responds; they may be enjoyed, delighted or even feel bored with the materials. According to Morrow and Schocker (as cited in Penaflorida: 1999) the use of authentic materials in order to use real-life material is just an important as the authenticity of response of the students to the text:

Whenever we read, listen to, or watch ‘text’ in real life, we have reactions or responses to them; we may be interested, indifferent, excited, or disgusted. The response may be intellectually emotional or aesthetic, it may involve cognitive or affective factors – but it is there. Nobody ever reads or listens to anything without some reactions to it and it is this reaction which we feel. It is the essence of communication, for this is what the text has truly communicated.

The main reason in employing authentic materials in English listening lesson is because the authentic materials motivate the students since they are intrinsically more interesting or stimulating than non-authentic materials (Peacock: 1997). Moreover, he also states that authentic texts bring learners more enjoyable and motivating. Teacher also needs to consider the type of the materials used for teaching listening skill. Many experts say that there are various authentic materials that can be applied in listening activities.

According to Duzer (2000), the use of authentic materials, such as workplace training videos, audio tapes of actual workplace exchanges, and TV and radio broadcasts, increases transferability to listening outside of the EFL classroom context – to work and to community.

There are various materials of authentic listening materials that can be applied by teachers. Some of them could be the news program from radio or TV, songs, movies, or TV programs. It is believed that by giving such materials, the learners would be provided with relaxed classroom atmosphere, and also arise a lot of interest and provide variety of techniques that the teacher can use in the classroom for different language and learning purposes. The teacher, however, needs to select the appropriate materials to meet the students' level and knowledge background and most of all it must be suitable with the syllabus of teaching objectives.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Using Authentic Materials for Teaching Listening Lesson

Strengths of using authentic materials

There are some advantages using authentic materials in teaching listening. According to Penny Ur (1996: 107), authentic materials are interesting and motivating for the students to do than textbook comprehension exercises. It is supported by Peacock (1997: 144) who states that authentic materials motivate learners because they are more interesting or stimulating than textbook tasks or non-authentic materials. Other advantages as explained by experts are that authentic materials give genuine language, and it is fresh every day. So, by applying authentic materials in teaching-learning activities, the students may be more interested in what is going on in other parts of the world. Similarly Wong et al. (1995: 318) state that authentic materials present current events in

the real world and happening in familiar places, so students may find it easier to relate the events to their own experience or knowledge.

Authentic materials are beneficial for language learning and teaching listening. It is believed that by requiring such materials can enhance students' interest and motivation in learning activities. Other advantages stated above also mention that by using authentic materials then the students may have experience in recognizing the spoken language that they heard from native speakers, which later on enhance them to be able to use the language in a communicative context. Moreover, authentic materials can serve as a bridge between the classroom and outside world that keep the students informed what is happening in the world.

Weaknesses of using authentic materials

According to experts, authentic materials do not only provide advantages in learning-teaching activities but they also have some disadvantages. Haines (1995: 62) mentions that authentic materials are too difficult for lower level students and the teacher will make students to have a failure feeling because they cannot understand the language being spoken. He also says that the recording of real authentic materials are often too long and have so many unrelated sections that can make students confused in getting the main point of the spoken language they hear. At the end, he adds that authentic materials often break the rules taught by the teacher and will form a bad habit in using the language. It is supported by Viney (2006) who states that authentic materials may cause the teacher to spend more hours in planning how to use it. He also says that authentic materials will only work well at the higher levels. And most of all he says that in using authentic materials will be difficult, if not impossible to

integrate the materials with the syllabus that the students are following.

In spite of the advantages brought by authentic materials, English teachers also need to consider the disadvantages caused by authentic materials. Some of them would be: the materials may be too difficult for lower level students, the teacher will need longer hours in planning and applying the materials, and most of all the teachers may find it difficult to adjust the materials with the syllabus that the school requires. Although it may be impossible to integrate the authentic materials for some parts of the syllabus such as the teacher can focus the materials with the topic of the lesson, the language functions, or maybe for presenting language structure.

CONCLUSION

Choosing the appropriate materials in teaching listening comprehension is one of the effective strategies to improve students' listening comprehension. English teachers need to apply authentic materials either written or spoken in order to maintain students' learning experience and to keep the student informed of what is happening to the outside world. Since it is necessary for teacher to apply authentic materials in listening lesson, it is also important to get natural responds from the students in using the materials because the students will have various responds; they may be enjoyed, delighted or even feel bored with the materials. Furthermore, teachers also need to consider the strengths and weaknesses in using authentic material itself. Using authentic materials are beneficial for language learning and teaching listening. It can enhance students' interest and motivation in learning activities. The students also may have experience in recognizing the spoken language that they heard from native speakers, which later on enhance them to be able to use the language

in a communicative context. On the contrary, authentic materials also have some weaknesses. The materials may be too difficult for lower level students, the teacher will need longer hours in planning and applying the materials, and most of all the teachers may find it difficult to adjust the materials with the syllabus that the school requires.

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