
INTEGRATING AUTHENTIC MATERIALS TO ENHANCE LISTENING COMPREHENSION: EVIDENCE FROM SECONDARY EFL CLASSROOMS IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the effect of using authentic materials on the listening skills of tenth-grade students at SMAN 1 Kamang Magek. The research was motivated by students' difficulty in understanding spoken English due to limited exposure to the language used in real-life contexts. A quasi-experimental design was employed, involving two groups: an experimental class taught using authentic materials and a control class taught using conventional methods. Each group consisted of 27 students and underwent four instructional meetings. Data were collected through pre-tests and post-tests, then analyzed using SPSS with the Wilcoxon and Mann-Whitney tests. The results revealed that the use of authentic materials significantly improved students' listening skills. This was evident from the higher post-test scores of the experimental group compared to the control group. The findings suggest that authentic materials not only enhance listening comprehension but also expose learners to real-life English usage, including accent, intonation, and contextual meaning. It is therefore recommended that teachers incorporate authentic materials into their teaching to better prepare students for real-world communication.

Keyword : *Authentic materials, listening skills, language learning*

INTRODUCTION

English is an international language of communication, officially used as a medium of instruction in 42 countries around the world. In addition, English is the most dominant and influential language in the world (Syafitri & Artika, 2019). This shows that English plays an important role in communication between people. Therefore, English must be taught to students at all levels of education in Indonesia. Listening is a basic skill that is very important

when learning a language, especially English as a foreign language. This is the first receptive skill that students must master before developing other language skills such as speaking, reading, and writing. Listening skills can be better mastered through regular listening practice (Melanie, 2020). Listening skills play an important role in communication because they help students understand the meaning conveyed by the speaker (Nation & Newton, 2008). However, teaching listening skills is still a challenge in many educational institutions, including at the secondary level. According to Asatryan (2022) listening consists of five stages. This process includes hearing, understanding, remembering, evaluating and responding. Many students have difficulty understanding listening materials, especially when they listen to audio that uses natural language with different accents, intonations, and vocabulary. This difficulty is compounded by the use of listening teaching materials that are not authentic and do not reflect real language use. In addition, the goal of the teaching and learning process is to achieve the ability to communicate both orally and in writing (Cardena, 2017). This means that training does not only focus on understanding concepts or theories, but also on developing effective communication skills. This is in line with the communicative approach to language learning, where learning success is measured by the extent to which students can use the language in real-life situations.

Listening skills are one of the important aspects in language learning, especially in the context of teaching English. According to Vandergrift (2007), listening skills are the main key to understanding the language used by native speakers. In today's global world, this skill is becoming more important because English is often used as the language of instruction in various fields, such as education, business, and international communication. Although important, teaching listening skills often faces significant challenges. One of the main problems is the use of limited learning materials, especially in the context of education in Indonesia. Many teachers use standardized teaching materials, such as texts in textbooks, which do not reflect the language used in real life. This makes it difficult for students to understand the language in a broader and more dynamic context.

One approach that can overcome these challenges is the use of authentic materials in learning. Authentic materials, such as recordings of real conversations, videos, and news articles, give students the opportunity to hear language used in everyday contexts. The use of authentic materials can help students prepare themselves to understand natural conversations that occur outside the classroom, improving their listening skills.

According to Field (2008), authentic materials provide great advantages in language learning, especially in improving listening comprehension. Authentic materials introduce variations in pronunciation, accents, and vocabulary that may not be present in traditional teaching materials. This allows students to develop their ability to deal with the diversity of languages often encountered in real life.

However, although the use of authentic materials has many advantages, there are some challenges in its implementation in the classroom. One of the main challenges is the difficulty faced by students in understanding fast and unstructured materials, such as everyday conversations. In addition, authentic materials often contain more complex vocabulary or phrases and are not always appropriate to the level of understanding of students. The role of teachers in using authentic materials is very crucial. Teachers must be able to choose materials that are appropriate to the level of students' abilities and provide clear guidance in dealing with the material. Teachers also need to create a supportive learning environment, where students feel comfortable asking questions or asking for explanations if they have difficulty understanding the material.

The use of authentic materials has attracted attention as an effective approach to improving students' listening skills. According to Ahmed (2017), various types of authentic materials can be used in English language learning. Teachers can obtain materials from various sources such as English newspapers, magazines, brochures, television, and radio. In addition, technological advances, especially the Internet, make it easier for teachers to access authentic materials. These materials provide students with the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the language as it is used naturally by native speakers in various real-world contexts, making the learning process more interesting and meaningful. According to Rost (2011), authentic materials provide students with the natural language listening experience necessary to develop listening comprehension. In addition, the use of authentic materials can also increase student motivation, cultural awareness, and practical communication skills.

Several previous studies have shown that the use of authentic materials can improve students' listening skills. For example, studies by Richards (2006) showed that students who were taught using authentic materials showed significant improvements in their listening comprehension. In addition, a study by Berne (2004) also showed that authentic materials help students develop listening skills in various real-life situations.

Although there are many studies on the use of authentic materials, research at the high school level in Indonesia, especially at SMAN 1 Kamang Magek, is still limited. Therefore,

this study aims to fill this gap by examining the effect of the use of authentic materials on students' listening skills in grade X. The benefits of this study are not only for students, but also for teachers and curriculum developers. For students, this study is expected to provide a more real and applicable learning experience. For teachers, this study can provide new insights into effective ways to improve listening skills through the use of authentic materials. For curriculum developers, the results of this study can be the basis for designing learning materials that are more relevant and in accordance with students' needs. Overall, this study is expected to enrich the literature on teaching listening skills in Indonesia, especially in the context of using authentic materials. The results of this study can be used to suggest more effective teaching methods that can be applied in various schools in Indonesia, improve the quality of English learning, and prepare students to face real-world challenges.

In the context of English language teaching in Indonesia, the use of authentic materials is still limited. Many schools still rely on traditional audio materials, which are written and do not necessarily prepare students to communicate in real-life situations. At SMAN 1 Kamang Magek, observations and interviews conducted by researchers revealed that students face a number of problems in developing their listening skills. These challenges include limited vocabulary, difficulty understanding audio content, and lack of understanding of the various languages used in everyday life. As a result, students often feel less motivated and less engaged in listening activities in class.

To address these issues, this study examines the use of authentic materials in listening skills learning for grade X students at SMAN 1 Kamang Magek. The purpose of this study was to determine whether the use of authentic materials has a significant impact on improving students' listening skills. By integrating authentic audio sources, this study aims to provide a more realistic and effective learning experience so that students are better prepared to communicate in real-life situations.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a quasi-experimental design with a non-equivalent control group. As Creswell (2009) states, quantitative research aims to objectively test theories by examining the relationship between measurable variables. The design included two groups: an experimental group, which received treatment using authentic listening materials, and a control group, which received conventional listening

instruction. Both groups were assessed using pre-tests and post-tests to determine the effectiveness of the intervention.

The participants in this study were tenth-grade students (Class X) from SMAN 1 Kamang Magek, with a total population of 84 students distributed across three classes. Using cluster random sampling, two classes were selected to participate: Class X.1 was assigned as the experimental group, and Class X.2 served as the control group, with 27 students in each class. Both groups were taught by the same English teacher, and class equivalence was confirmed by the teacher's assessment of students' general English proficiency. To verify group comparability before the intervention, homogeneity and normality tests were conducted using SPSS version 20. These tests confirmed that both groups were statistically comparable in their initial listening proficiency.

The primary instrument used for data collection was a listening comprehension test designed in multiple-choice format. The test consisted of 25 questions, which were adapted from standard national examination items and validated by two English education experts. The test measured students' understanding of spoken texts, including main ideas, specific information, inference, and vocabulary in context.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This study involved 54 students of Class X of SMAN 1 Kamang Magek, who were divided into two groups: the experimental class (XE-1) and the control class (XE-2), with 27 students in each class. The research data were obtained through two types of listening tests, namely the initial test conducted before the treatment and the final test conducted after the treatment. The experimental class was taught using authentic materials, while the control class used traditional methods.

Before the treatment began, students in both classes were given a pre-test to assess their initial listening skills. After the completion of the treatment, both groups were given a post-test to assess learning outcomes. The data collected showed significant differences in outcomes between the two classes as shown in the following table:

Table 1: Students Listening Accuracy Pre-Test and Post-Test				
Variation	Average score before test	Average after testing	Standard deviation before testing	Standard deviation after testing
Experimental Class	33.78	52.59	12,068	10,796

Control class	30.67	46.22	11,845	7,871
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In addition, the standard deviation of the experimental class in the post-test (10.796) was smaller than the standard deviation in the pre-test (12.068), indicating that students' learning outcomes became more consistent after the treatment. In contrast, although the control class also experienced an increase in average scores, the relatively small standard deviation (7.871) indicated that the traditional method had a more limited impact on improving students' listening skills. Thus, these data further confirm that the use of authentic materials in teaching listening is more effective than traditional methods in improving students' listening skills.

The experimental group showed a mean increase of 18.81 points, while the control group showed an increase of 15.55 points. Additionally, the standard deviation in the experimental group decreased from 12.07 to 10.80, suggesting more consistent performance among students after the intervention. Although both groups improved, the increase in the experimental group was both greater and more uniform.

To determine the significance of these changes, non-parametric statistical tests were used due to the non-normal distribution of the data. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test revealed a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores in the experimental group ($p < 0.05$), indicating a strong effect of the authentic materials. Conversely, the control group did not show a statistically significant difference ($p > 0.05$), despite a slight increase in mean scores.

The Mann–Whitney U Test was employed to compare the post-test scores between the experimental and control groups. The results indicated a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$), further confirming that students taught with authentic materials outperformed those taught using traditional methods.

Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate the significant positive effect of authentic materials on students' listening comprehension in an EFL context. These findings align with a substantial body of previous research emphasizing the pedagogical value of real-world language input in improving listening skills. For instance, Field (2008) emphasized that exposure to authentic language enables learners to process naturally occurring speech, including its inherent features such as reduced forms, hesitation, and varying speeds—elements often absent in textbook-based materials. The findings of this study support this, as

students exposed to authentic audio materials (e.g., news clips, conversations, and podcasts) achieved higher comprehension scores and demonstrated more consistent performance.

Similarly, Vandergrift (2007) argued that authentic materials enhance learners' ability to interpret meaning from context and to deal with unfamiliar accents and colloquial expressions. In this study, the experimental group's improved ability to understand real-life language suggests that authentic input helps learners develop essential listening strategies, such as inferring meaning and identifying key information from context.

The results also echo the findings of Aziza (2016) and Fitria (2015), who both reported that authentic audio and video materials increased not only students' listening performance but also their motivation. This study observed a similar effect, with students in the experimental group showing more consistent post-test scores, likely due to increased engagement and exposure to meaningful language content.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of authentic materials can be interpreted through the lens of Information Processing Theory. According to Flowerdew & Miller (2005), listening is an active process requiring learners to filter, decode, and construct meaning from auditory input. Authentic materials simulate real-life listening situations, forcing learners to engage in these cognitive processes more fully than when using scripted audio. From a contextual learning perspective, as noted by Johnson (2008), materials grounded in real-life use foster better transfer of knowledge. By interacting with language used in authentic contexts, learners can better apply what they learn in the classroom to real-world situations.

However, effective implementation of authentic materials also depends heavily on the teacher's instructional approach. The positive results observed in this study may be partially attributed to the teacher's ability to scaffold the listening tasks, guide students through complex input, and maintain classroom engagement. This aligns with Gilmore (2007), who stressed that without proper support, authentic materials may overwhelm learners due to complexity and unpredictability.

Despite its promising outcomes, this study acknowledges certain limitations. The sample was limited to one grade level in a single school, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study did not account for learners' preferences or prior exposure to English outside the classroom, both of which could influence listening performance. Future research should explore the long-term effects of using authentic materials and their impact on other language skills such as speaking and pronunciation. Moreover, investigating the effectiveness of different types of authentic materials (e.g.,

interviews, vlogs, podcasts) across various proficiency levels could offer deeper insights into how to tailor authentic listening instruction to learners' needs.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the use of authentic materials has a positive and significant impact on students' listening skills. Students who were exposed to real-life audio and video materials demonstrated noticeable improvement in their ability to comprehend spoken English. The use of authentic materials helped enhance learners' engagement, motivation, and ability to process natural language, suggesting that integrating real-world input into listening instruction is more effective than relying solely on conventional, scripted materials. These results highlight the importance of providing learners with exposure to language as it is genuinely used in everyday contexts. Authentic materials not only support the development of listening skills but also help students become more confident and better prepared for real communication outside the classroom. As a suggestion for future research, it is recommended to explore the use of authentic materials in developing other language skills, such as speaking, writing, or reading comprehension. Researchers could also investigate the impact of different types of authentic input across varied educational levels and learning environments to provide a broader understanding of its effectiveness. Further studies might also include qualitative insights to capture students' perceptions and strategies when engaging with authentic materials.

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