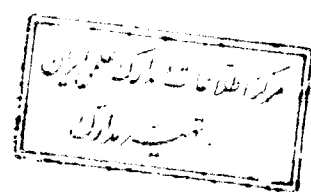


IN THE NAME OF GOD

MA THESIS

***The effect of authentic listening materials on
the listening proficiency of the EFL learners
in the intermediate level***

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parents for all their
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and during the completion
of this study.***

ABSTRACT

Until recently, The skill of listening comprehension has been somewhat neglected, because the language teachers' attention was so fixed on the ultimate goal-speaking- that they failed to recognize the need for developing functional listening comprehension, skill as a prerequisite for developing speaking skill. But in recent years listening comprehension is felt to be a necessary preliminary to oral proficiency.

As Belasco states:

Because a student can utter a few sentences in a foreign language, is no guarantee that he can understand them in the mouth of a native speaker.

Certainly, practical experience indicates that listening is not a passive

skill. Due to the high levels of listening comprehension skill, native speakers have achieved, they may not be fully aware of the effort they are expending in their communication. However, when they are distracted, tired or unmotivated, they are immediately forced to increase their efforts to comprehend what they are hearing. The amount of concentration and effort required to comprehend oral passages in a second language naturally is much higher than that required in the native language.

Since the realization of its importance, the main question for teachers has been what to do and what to use to improve the learners' listening comprehension skill in the classroom.

In order to develop the listening comprehension skill, the first step is to select appropriate listening materials and activities for the classroom. Language teachers may use a variety of criteria to guide them in selecting appropriate listening materials for their classes.

But, the question of how to go about using listening materials in the

classroom, is still open to discussion. Like many of the other issues in the field of material selection, the question of using authentic materials has become polarized in to an opposition between a good new approach and a bad old one.

Many teachers nowadays feel that there is something basically unsatisfactory about using scripted dialogs, since they tend to lack the discourse of genuine texts. Moreover they can never enable the learners deal with the real language outside the classroom, due to the great mismatch between the real language spoken by the native speakers and the artificial language they hear in the classroom.

Recently the need for, and the usefulness of authentic materials have been increasingly acknowledged. This move towards authenticity in language instruction, reflects the increased interest in recent years in the communicative functions of language.

In order to define authenticity, "Geddes and white" distinguish between two types of authentic discourse:

1) Unmodified authentic discourse which refers to language occurred originally as a genuine act of communication.

2) Simulated authentic discourse which refers to language produced for pedagogical purposes, but which exhibits features that have a high probability of occurrence in genuine acts of communication. It consists of simplified code, characterized by slower and more careful articulation and attempts to ensure comprehension via paraphrase and restatement.

Lots of educators tend to consider the second type of materials, non-authentic, since they are devoid of some crucial features of authenticity and are also culturally neutralized.

Therefore, the type of authenticity discussed in this study would be on the basis of the first definition which refers to the language occurred originally in the genuine act of communication without any pedagogical purposes.

According to Porter and Roberts:

If we are to help learners cope with the authentic situation of mismatch between the language they produce and that which they hear, we must at least expose them to authentic language and if possible, lead them to work out strategies for coming to terms with it.

But, still there are unconfirmed debates concerning the use of authentic materials in the classroom. Therefore, this study was centred around the following research questions:

1) Is there any significant difference between the effect of authentic and non-authentic listening materials on the listening proficiency of the EFL learners in the intermediate level?

2) If the use of authentic materials is proved to be effective, to what extent should the learners be exposed to them?

Accordingly, the following null hypothesis was proposed:

1) There is no significant difference between the listening proficiency of EFL learners regarding the use of authentic and non - authentic listening materials.

To test the null hypothesis, 60 female students of English Studying at Azad University, and 60 female students of English Studying English at the Iran language institute were randomly selected From a total population of 300 students. (150 students in each group).

The students at Azad University were regarded as the experimental group and the students at the Iran language institute were regarded as the controlled group.

To ensure the homogeneity of the two groups, in terms of their overall proficiency, the FCE test designed for the intermediate level was administered to both groups to the total population of 300. The subjects

whose grades were higher than 200 , and lower than 160, were excluded from the study since the research question concerned only the students of intermediate level. From among the remaining examinees, 60 students were randomly selected in each group. Computing the means, variances and taking an F-test and t-test, the two groups were equated.

Moreover, in order to regard the paralinguistic factors such as the learners' interest and social - educational background, a questionnaire containing 11 questions in Persian was given to the subjects. In order to compute the two groups' results of the questionnaire, a t-test was conducted on the scores of each question and the outcomes determined the homogeneity of the two groups regarding their social - educational background.

At the final stage, to ensure the effect of authentic listening materials on the listening proficiency of the subjects, a TOEFL listening test containing 45 questions was administered to both groups as a post - test.

The statistical procedures employed was the T-test.

Regarding the first research question, the observed t-value (3.19) exceeded the critical t-value (2.000,2.66) both at .05 and .01 levels of significance respectively.

The results revealed that the subjects who were taught on the basis of authentic materials had gained a higher degree of listening proficiency, thus rejecting the null hypothesis.

As for the second question which was to determine to what extent the learners should be exposed to the authentic materials, personal observation and experience during the term showed that the learners should be given shorts extracts of dialogues or recorded news and films in the beginning stage and gradually as they acquire listening strategies and get familiar with the features of authentic texts, there would be no limit on their use as long as they conform with the learners' needs and interests, and the teacher's attitude is culturally neutral.

Therefore, considering the statistical outcomes of the T-test, it can be

safely concluded that the use of authentic materials can highly improve the learners' listening proficiency and although the learners face considerable amount of language problem in the beginning, they'll turn out to be more attentive listeners. Moreover, as far as the language ambiguity is concerned, they can make the most of their world knowledge to predict the missing words and phrases in order to get the gist of the listening passage.