

USING AUTHENTIC MATERIALS TO IMPROVE LISTENING SKILL.

Scientific supervisor: M.Nomozova

2nd year student: M.Ismoilova

Annotation: *There are many interesting and high-motivated texts among authentic materials such as some radio or TV programs (spoken language of programs differs in speed, rhythm, lexical and grammatical supply), short thematic (often humoristic) stories, rhymes, general educational programs, weather forecast, sport comments, relatively difficult are talk shows, movies, songs, etc.*

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Listening texts can be classified according to the contents, complexity, authenticity, sphere, theme, quantity, etc. The linguistic and thematic level of listening input and its adequacy to general teaching purposes or concrete goals of each lesson are defined by a sort of criteria. The main language and content elements of the particular listening text mostly provide the style and type of working on it, though this does not exclude the general approach.

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According to A. Anderson a recent survey of the preferences for particular published listening materials among EFL teachers working in Britain, Europe, and Japan suggests that the following are among the reasons for teachers' satisfaction with particular listening materials:

- 1) good for starting discussions
- 2) can be used for self-access learning
- 3) contains a variety of tasks
- 4) entertaining and amusing
- 5) easy to use
- 6) practices guessing from context
- 7) uses authentic material
- 8) integrates different skills

The selection of listening activities (making a list of the participants or giving their description) is affected not only by the level of the material itself, but by the language level of learners as well.

Quite often it is necessary to pre-teach lexical and grammatical units owing to the linguistic difficulties, sphere and topic of the text. Sometimes it is better to explain the meaning of new language elements at while listening level. Some of the texts demand working on their stylistic peculiarities beforehand especially if learners are quite ignorant to them.

Dialogue and monologue are universally acknowledged to be the main types of oral comprehension. Most of the listening text should contain dialogues for general ELT course, as they are the significant part of authentic communication. But at high level of ELT and ESP the role of monologue (presentation, report, and lecture) is enormously increased. Thus the great consideration should be conveyed to the use of these listening texts.

Spoken texts are categorized into three broad types: static, dynamic and abstract. The structure of static text (such as one describing an object or giving someone instructions on how to assemble a model) is rather complicated and the comprehension of such listening input is practically unpredictable without visual support. To the contrary, it is much easier to percept and understand a dynamic text (involving shifts of scene and time, drifting the people or characters of the text in and out of the story) even when visual clues are not available. But if the details are demanded to be memorized it is useful for learners to make up a plan by putting down key words (in this case learners create visual support themselves).

As for abstract texts (focusing on someone's ideas, beliefs, theories, problems, opinions), they are pretty difficult to be responded even in native language without visual aids (picture, scheme, table, chart etc.).

Students can benefit not only from audio recordings but from the experience of listening to their teacher and each other. Both have advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages of recorded materials:

1. Recorded materials enable a non-native English teacher to provide the audience with the variety of English sounds, voices and accents. The used material is authentic by means of language and situational context.
2. Distribution of recorded materials lets the teacher or a student to work with them according to their desire in the way to stop, restart or repeat for several times (in terms of analyzing or imitating unfamiliar speech patterns).
3. They can be used automatically by a student any time.
4. While listening to the recorded materials students listen to several speakers, their discussions and conversations.

5. Video based listening practice suggests videotape advantages and additionally provides the variety of visual support (gestures, mimics) typical for real life and necessary for students to decipher speakers' message and interrelations.

6. The contents, spheres, themes and phonetic input of recorded materials is more colorful compared to "real life" listening comprehension.

7. It is easier to choose and prepare listening activities beforehand with the help of recorded materials

Disadvantages of recorded materials.

1. There is no straight communication between the listener and the speaker. Thus, there is no way to regulate the speed, rhythm and other peculiarities of speech, to work out the compensating strategies (i. e. stating the message contents with the help of the partner) within students.

2. Audio and video materials are not always of a very good technical quality. This fact can make students rather confused and distract from productive and successful studying.

Advantages of live listening

1. The choice of the listening input (acceptability of the language),
2. The ability of determination (in case it is necessary),
3. Minimal technical background noise,
4. The ability of using visual aids (mimics and gestures),
5. Reaction of the speaker.

Disadvantages of live listening

1. Live listening situations cannot be exactly identical in occurrence. To the contrary from recorded materials small segments cannot be repeated or speech production cannot be stopped artificially.

2. Incomplete utterance of speakers (especially when students listen to each other). Though, it has already been mentioned that the main goal of listening comprehension practice is not only the perception of original model production but also the formation of the skills that make students understand any kind of foreign speech (including non-native international language speakers).

As for the concept of authenticity, we can speak about the authenticity of the language used in the listening materials and about the authenticity of the materials themselves. According to S. Haines this is a kind of spoken or written language used by the native speaker. And authentic are the materials taken from real life communication (newspaper articles, tourist informational leaflets, radio and TV programs, "real-life" conversations.) and not materials especially designed for teaching purposes.

The alternative to authentic materials in teaching processes is the material deliberately simplified to match the definite level of learners at the definite stage of teaching. These are the texts concentrating on the language (lexical, grammatical) input that has to be acquired. The "fight" against non-authentic materials started in the 1970-

s with the change to communicative approach as strictly controlled structural materials designed according to audio-lingual method were found to be inadequate.

Most modern English language teachers wish to provide their students with realistic listening materials that go next to reality in order to handle with real life listening communications. It led to the great interest to authentic materials that contain natural spoken language and mostly are recorded in the way that speakers know nothing about it. Thus, students keep in touch with natural "part of life" which is very significant and necessary for successful language acquisition.

S. Haines considers the following to be the advantages of authentic materials:

1. Authentic texts have a communicative purpose unrelated to the language teaching itself,
2. Most texts are aimed at particular target listeners, who may be expected to react to the text in some way,
3. Authenticity itself is attractive to learners,
4. Authentic texts help students to develop listening strategies,
5. Heard English Language is real, and not the one devised by the course book author or artistically performed by professional actors. This fact builds up the interest in students to tackle apparently "impossible" real life situations.
6. As the speech is the perfect example of real spoken language there are many forms and ways of working on it: Paying attention to the accent, working out the pitch of the voice, activities based on commonly used and useful phrases or expressions.

Disadvantages of authentic materials:

- 1) The enormous difficulties that sometimes affect the motivation of students and lower the teaching process because of the negative influence,
- 2) The low level of matching with teaching program. (It is not easy to choose the material matching with necessary topics, vocabulary and grammar),
- 3) Most of the taught language rules are broken in them,
- 4) They have much background and technical noise,
- 5) Authentic texts are soon out of date,
- 6) Much authentic material is ambiguous (because of the ignorance of wider and further context),
- 7) They are too long to be used in classroom conditions.

These disadvantages are not characteristic to any of the materials designed for special teaching purposes, though they are less natural or interesting. As for the students confidence it is encouraged because of the acceptable language input of deliberately devised texts. We should also not underestimate the feeling of pride of the learner whose language acquisition level is rather limited and who manages to decode much more information from authentic materials than his vocabulary stock can afford. Consequently, both types of material (authentic or non-authentic) can be satisfactorily

used in teaching, but as authentic ones match the final goals of education the amount of used texts should increase for authentic.

The typical characteristic features of non-authentic materials represent both advantages and disadvantages:

- Unnatural rhythm, speed and intonation;
- Artificial articulation, fluent speech;
- Structural language, complete sentences, logical information;- Non-existence of background noise.

All these criteria apply to the easiest and better ways of foreign language acquisition. On the other hand, learners get used to listen to unnatural speech.

The choice of authentic and non-authentic texts is a rather complicated and problematic issue. Many methods specialists insist on using only one type. But this position is not acceptable not regarding a compromise. Both types of listening input can be distributed in the language teaching process because of their positive and negative aspects, though the proportion should be changed making nonauthentic materials . The review of literature indicated that learners should be provided with appropriate materials and activities in which they can learn how to understand the English language. Teachers should give learners the opportunity to listen to native speakers' speech, should select listening texts that are produced by non-native speakers so that they can develop their listening skills and do not get disappointed. When learners have developed their listening skills to a specified level, teachers can choose texts spoken by native speakers as teaching materials and activities. Suitable teaching in listening comprehension can decrease listening anxiety and provide a good basis for becoming independent learners who can effectively use the listening process for learning.

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