

Authentic Materials in Fostering EFL Students Listening Comprehension

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Abstract—Selecting and presenting materials in a listening classroom especially in coping with the difficulties in catching the meaning and the information and the limitation of the materials produced by the native speakers become the problems in teaching listening in EFL context. The way how the materials presented is also an important thing in mastering listening. Thus the selection of authentic materials is an urgent factor to be considered before implementing it in EFL listening classroom. The research is aimed at investigating the selection of authentic materials in fostering students' listening comprehension in an EFL classroom. This study focused on the selection of authentic materials in teaching listening comprehension. This case study was designed to concentrate on the teacher's way of planning and designing the authentic materials to be implemented by an English teacher who teaches at eleventh grade at one private senior high school in Pekanbaru, Riau Province. The data were collected by documents, classroom observations, and interviews. The data were analyzed by theory of designing materials proposed by Howard and Major [1]. The findings indicated that the selection of the authentic materials by the teacher could foster students' listening comprehension. The materials selected could improve students' vocabulary and could motivate the students to learn. In addition, the findings also indicated that the selection of authentic materials was implemented well in the classroom. Further suggestion is made to address classroom problems regarding the variety of materials in teaching EFL listening comprehension.

Keywords—*authentic materials; listening comprehension; materials development; EFL*

I. INTRODUCTION

As one of the four language learning skills, listening plays an important role in the realm of language teaching especially English. Listening had to be mastered by the students as they mastered other language skills. Due to its' importance, this skill should be learnt by English language learners and the teachers needed to provide proper materials in their teaching instructions. However, it is not such an easy task to be done by many English teachers, since listening is so called "Cinderella skill" in second language learning [2]. Listening becomes less important to be taught to the students, and listening becomes the neglected skill in language classroom and poorly taught [3]. Many English teachers avoid teaching listening; they have greater emphasis on speaking [2]. The complexity pattern of

English component such as vocabulary, grammar and accent in teaching listening seemed to make the teachers do not pay attention in teaching listening. The teachers give fewer portions to it and it seems that they ignore the fact that listening is a part of English skill that should be achieved.

A study has pointed out that the selected and presented materials become the problems in teaching [4]. In her preliminary study, she found the problems occurred in listening classroom where many students found the difficulties in catching ideas and the information. The occurring problems in listening classroom are; first, because of the native speakers' accent. For most the EFL students, the native speakers' accent sometimes made the important information miss while they are listening. The problem appears since the students' lack of exposure in listening the native's accent because they have little chance to hear the real language from the native speaker. They were not familiar to hear the language that is produced by the native speaker. Furthermore, the limitation of listening materials source which is produced by the native speaker also becomes the problem in listening classroom. And the third problem is in selecting the appropriate materials will lead the student's anxiety and unmotivated to study [4].

This research aims to find the use of authentic materials in fostering students listening comprehension in EFL classroom. This study will give a contribution and insight for teachers and language practitioners to improve English teaching and learning. Authentic materials provide an extremely good stepping stone for those who are not entirely familiar with using authentic materials since authentic materials can be easily accessed by both teachers and students.

Thus in order to make the listening classroom become more effective and more interesting and to solve the problems mentioned above, some of the teachers consider to use the suitable materials in listening classroom. Some of the teachers consider that authentic listening materials will engage student in listening classroom. Some of teachers preferred to use authentic materials as they realized that using authentic materials would expose students to the everyday real language, as used in the daily life language.

Nunan divides listening material into authentic and non-authentic material. He defines authentic materials as spoken or written language data that has been produced in the course of

real communication while non-authentic material (commercial material) texts are especially designed for language learning purposes [5]. The language in non-authentic material text is artificial and unvaried, concentrating on something that has to be taught [6]. The authentic materials relate more closely to learners' needs and hence provide a link between the classrooms to the real world [7].

II. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive qualitative study. This study was designed to concentrate on the teacher's ways of planning and designing the authentic material to be implemented in the listening classroom in a certain period of teaching. The respondent involved in this study is an English teacher of secondary schools, and chosen purposively since authentic materials in teaching listening were used in the classroom. Interview and classroom observation were used to collect the data. The first method for collecting the data was semi structured interview which consists of ten questions. The first four questions cover the roles of authentic materials in language teaching. And the second six questions cover the effect of using authentic materials.

III. FINDINGS

A. *The Roles of Using Authentic Materials in Language Teaching*

The first issue related to the teacher's beliefs on the use of authentic materials is the roles of authentic materials in language teaching. Data were obtained from interview by asking the teacher about the benefit of authentic materials compared to non-authentic English textbooks. The teacher responded that authentic materials attract the students' attention during the teaching-learning activities. Authentic materials also provide the real learning experience and enrich students' knowledge. The explanation can be seen in the following excerpt.

Excerpt #1

Yes. Authentic materials attracted my students' attention. It gave reality to the lesson, and enriched students' knowledge. My students are able to see what is exactly happening in the topic of the day. (Interview Data)

Thus, it is clear that authentic materials are more beneficial compared to the non-authentic English textbooks. Authentic materials can also reinforce students to the direct relation between the language classroom and the outside world by offering a way to contextualize language learning.

The next question in this issue is about the role of authentic materials as a supplement to non-authentic materials. The teacher said that authentic materials have role as supplementary or additional materials in the classroom. It can be seen in the excerpt below.

Excerpt #2

According to me, yes. Because as we know that, we had our own materials based on the syllabus given, authentic materials

are just as supplementary or additional materials in the classroom. (Interview Data)

The teacher answered the question based on her teaching experience in using the syllabus and lesson plan as the main guidance for the teaching-learning activities. Thus, the use of authentic materials is only as the supplementary or additional materials in order to foster her creativity in teaching listening and to increase students' attention. Authentic material also offers students a valuable source of language input, as students can be exposed to more than just the language presented by the teacher and the text.

The next is about the students' readiness to learn English without exposure to authentic texts. The teacher responded that the students still can learn English well without exposure to the authentic texts since authentic materials only play the additional part compared to the textbook provided by the school. It is found in the result of interview in the following excerpt.

Excerpt #3

Yes, as I told you before, authentic material is an additional material to the text book provided by the school. (Interview Data)

The use of authentic materials in EFL classroom provides many things. In today's globalized world, the most commonly authentic materials used are newspapers, TV programs, menus, magazines, internet, movies, songs, brochures, comics, literature (novels, poems and short stories), advertisements for events, course catalogues from schools and so forth. Such materials have their advantages and disadvantages to classroom students. However, the students still can learn English without using the authentic materials since the materials are used as additional material in the teaching-learning activities.

The last question in the first issue discusses the opportunity to interact with authentic materials. The teacher answered that it is important for the students to be able to interact with authentic materials. Besides, authentic materials also give the opportunity to bring the outside world into the classroom. It can be seen in the excerpt below.

Excerpt #4

Yes, in my opinion, the students have to interact with the authentic materials, where the authentic materials bring outside world into the classroom. (Interview Data)

Interacting with authentic materials in EFL classroom helps students expose the real discourse, as in videos of interviews with famous people where intermediate students listen for gist. They provide exposure to real language. Therefore, it is important for students to be able to interact with authentic materials to get the more real learning experience.

B. *Effects of Using Authentic Materials*

The second issue related to the teacher's beliefs on the use of authentic materials is the effect of using authentic materials. The teacher was asked whether the students showed the better learning motivation during the teaching-learning activities by using authentic materials. The teacher responded that the students showed greater learning motivation when she used

authentic texts. The result of interview can be seen in the following excerpt.

Excerpt #5

Yes, when I used authentic listening materials, my students showed greater interest and they are motivated in listening activities. (Interview Data)

It is important to know the effect of using authentic materials on teaching listening. One of the advantages of using authentic materials is that authentic materials can stimulate students' motivation. The students can directly listen to the actual language spoken by the native speakers.

Authentic materials also help students gain confidence in using English. The next issue related to the effect of using authentic materials is how authentic materials can make students feel confident during the teaching-learning process. The teacher responded that she used authentic materials in the form of videos and song. The result of the interview can be seen in the following excerpt.

Excerpt #6

Yes, in some cases when I used authentic materials, especially I played song or video; the students felt confident in responding to the materials. (Interview Data)

The excerpt shows that the students feel more confident in classroom activities when the teacher plays songs or movies. It makes the class more alive since the students are engaged well in the teaching-learning activities. Thus, it is clear that the use of authentic materials can help students gain confidence especially in responding the materials given by the teacher.

In addition, authentic materials are also beneficial to the students' development of receptive skills. Another issue related to the effect of using authentic materials is about the effect of authentic materials on the students' ability in improving their receptive skills. The teacher responded that the students showed the development in their listening skill. The result of the interview can be seen in the following excerpt.

Excerpt #7

Yes, we know that listening as part of receptive skill, by using authentic listening materials my students' listening comprehension is developed. (Interview Data)

The excerpt shows that listening is the part of receptive skill. It is shown that the teacher can help students to improve their listening skill by using authentic materials.

Authentic materials are also beneficial to the students' productive skills. Another issue related to the effect of using authentic materials is that authentic materials are important to improve students' productive skills. The teacher responded that authentic materials are helpful for her students' speaking and writing skill. The result of the interview can be seen in the following excerpt.

Excerpt #8

Yes, authentic materials are very helpful for my students in speaking and writing. (Interview Data)

The excerpt shows that authentic materials can be helpful not only for the receptive skills such as listening but also for the productive skills such as writing and speaking. Thus, it can be said that authentic materials can help students improve their English skills effectively.

Authentic texts also broaden students' knowledge, understanding, and experience of various cultures in which English is used. Another issue related to the effect of using authentic materials is that authentic materials can help students improve their knowledge, understanding, and experience of many different cultures where English is used. The teacher responded that the use of authentic materials provides the students' knowledge about cultural diversity. The result of interview can be seen in the following excerpt.

Excerpt #9

Yes, my students' knowledge about various cultures in English speaking countries developed at least they know the diversity of cultures. (Interview Data)

Based on excerpt 9, authentic materials help the students get more knowledge about the diversity of culture. Knowing the cultural diversity is very important for the students who learn English as a foreign language. It helps students get more understanding about the content of the learning material. Thus, it is clear that authentic materials improve students' knowledge about the cultures where English is used.

The last issue related to the effect of using authentic materials is that authentic materials play a good start of the idea of "English-as-a-global-language". The teacher responded that authentic materials can make students recognize everything happening in the world. The result of the interview can be seen in the following excerpt.

Excerpt #10

Yes, authentic materials keep students informed about what is happening in the world. (Interview Data)

Based on excerpt 10, authentic materials can give students any information about the things in the world. It can be said that the use of authentic materials can also provide students with recent and newest information in the world. It is important for students since knowledge about everything in the world can help them learn English well. Besides, it helps students to be more knowledgeable in every aspect of subjects.

IV. DISCUSSION

The first important feature is the relevance of authentic materials to syllabus and students' needs. The authentic materials that the teacher used during the teaching-learning process are relevant to the syllabus and students' needs. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher explained to the students about the objectives of the lesson. The topic of the lesson learned is about formal and non-formal invitation. The objective of this topic is students are able to invite others by using letter both spoken and written in formal and informal way. Substantial input of authentic materials that are adapted to the learners' level and interests certainly increased their sensitivity to and competence in the target language. As Laamri

pointed out that authentic materials should be [8]: (1) authenticity: the selected material should serve communicative goals, (2) accessibility: the material should be easy for the learner to understand and suitable for the teacher, (3) appropriateness: it should suit the learner's age, level needs and interest, (4) applicability: it should suit the teaching context and makes the objectives attainable, (4) adaptability: it should be adapted to the learners' level, needs and interests.

One of the crucial things in using authentic material is to consider its cultural appropriateness. It is important since we have different culture from the culture that usually appears in textbooks. During the teaching-learning process, it was seen that the teacher was not successful to consider the cultural appropriateness related to authentic materials used in the teaching-learning process. Authentic materials also facilitate cultural adaptation of the target language, language comprehension and language use [9]. I believe that language is closely related to culture and they complement each other in the teaching and learning process. Authentic materials also improved and make the language classroom livelier by providing students with the exposure of the different culture and customs and make the lesson more interesting and enjoyable [10]. Therefore, it was seen that the students seemed to not understand the learning materials well.

The teacher has applied the linguistics demands during the teaching-learning process by using authentic materials. It is important to consider the linguistics demands since authentic materials usually contain difficult parts such as the high lexical density and unfamiliar words and vocabularies. Authentic materials are potentially difficult because of the high lexical density, idiomatic language, low frequency vocabulary used for satirical effect, and opaque cultural references all combine to make it, pragmatically inert for most students [11]. In fact, too many unknown words make the reading process too difficult [12] and too many complex language structures cause a big burden to students [13]. So, it is likely that using authentic materials may frighten students.

Using authentic materials can facilitate classroom activities to be connected with outside world. In the teaching-learning process, it was seen that the teacher has succeeded to apply the cognitive demands during the teaching learning process. Cognitively, using authentic materials can bridge the gap between the classroom and the outside world. Hedge stated that there is a lack of naturalness in non-authentic materials [14]. This may lower students' ability of using English in the reality. Using authentic materials would facilitate students' learning. Otherwise, they can just learn English through textbooks. They can't really communicate with others in their daily life.

In terms of quality, the text used as the teaching materials should have the good quality for the students. It means that the text which is given to the students should be an appropriate sample of language use and model. Quality refers to as a model of use or as a representative token of a text-type [15]. It means that the text which is given to the students should be an appropriate sample of language use and model, the text given to the students were text which is not to polish the students, but in order they can learn from the text given.

Exploitability refers to how the text can be used to develop the students' competence. It was seen that the teacher was successful to consider exploitability of the text in the teaching-learning process. Exploitability refers to how the text can be used to develop the students' competence. A text that cannot be exploited for teaching purposes has no use in the classroom. Just because it is in English does not mean that it can be useful [7]. Therefore, it is important to consider the exploitability of the text.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

There are several points that can be concluded. How authentic materials are used in teaching listening can be seen in three aspects. First, the teacher sees authentic materials in teaching listening positively. The teacher has a good understanding about authentic materials. In terms of its role, the teacher perceives authentic materials as supplementary materials in teaching English. However, the teacher still faces several difficulties in preparing authentic materials especially when it comes to find appropriate materials which fit to the school syllabus and it is considered time-consuming. In spite of the difficulties, the teacher is still able to fit the materials with the students' needs and characteristics.

Since the use of Authentic materials in EFL listening classroom still has several weaknesses, it is better for teachers to be more selective in choosing the materials which contain the appropriate words choice and contents. Also, teachers should be more creative in handling the low achievement students to be more engaged in the classroom so that they can follow the teaching and learning process well.

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