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# THE IMPORTANCE OF AUTHENTIC MATERIAL IN IMPROVING LISTENING SKILLS

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**Abstract:** This article is focused on trying to improving listening skills through authentic materials and to discover how to facilitate learners' language learning process regarding through authentic materials at secondary schools. The findings revealed that incorporating authentic materials can significantly improve students' listening proficiency and foster a deeper understanding of a language.

**Keywords**: Authentic Materials, Listening Skills, Improvement, EFL Classes, Integration, Communicate, Motivation.

First, it is necessary to explain what vocabulary is. Listening is not only the single words in a language, but it also includes phrases. When learners are learning EFL listening they learn single words such as cat, table, classroom, etc., as well as phrases such as greetings, idioms, collocations, etc. Secondly, it is important to remember that a word does not have only one meaning, but several meanings that pupils need to know. In the words of Thornbury" …at the most basic level, knowing a word involves knowing its form and its meaning. Knowing the meaning of the word is not just knowing its dictionary meaning, it also means knowing the words commonly associated with it, as well as its connotations, including its register and its cultural accretions". [Thornbury 2002: 15]

As Cameron gives a similar definition, "in language teaching terms, the development of words, their meaning and the links between them will be covered under the term Listening".[Cameron 2001;18]

Authentic material is any material written in English that was not created for intentional use in the English classroom. Using this content for teaching English can make the teaching experience even more engaging, imaginative and motivating for students. [Salikhova 2025:10] Most of the young learners of this age (16-17) are restless and sometimes they do not pay much attention and sometimes they do not want to participate. For this reason, teachers need to be patient. Moreover, creativity is another matter of vital importance. A teacher of young learners needs to be able to create or adapt colorful and original material in order to prevent young learners from getting distracted. Furthermore, teachers need to be responsible with their lessons. If teachers work with young learners, they must not arrive at the classroom unprepared because young learners of this age always expect something fun to do in the English lesson. Another aspect related to responsibility is that teachers always have to be available to young learners, even if they are ill or do not feel well they have to come to all their classes with a happy face. It is important because young learners are sensitive and the mood of the teacher during the class affects their learning. For example, if a teacher comes to class happy, young learners will be motivated to learn; but if the teacher has a bad attitude, young learners will feel stressed.[1]

[1] Salikhova N. I. (2023). Web-based teaching in imroving reading skills. LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing., London, N2 9ED, United Kingdom.

A teacher also needs to consider the things that young learners are able to do according to their age. This is vital when planning the lesson because a teacher has to take into account the young learners' abilities to choose the appropriate material and activities. If teachers investigate and read more about their pupils' characteristics, they could achieve better results with their lessons. It will be easy for teachers to understand young learners' needs and interests if they try to see the world in the same way young learners do. In many cases, young learners give importance to small details and teachers need to be aware of this and be willing to deal with it in a calm way. Sometimes a child gets depressed because his/her friends do not want to share their lunch or because he/she does not have the same toys, his friends do. As a result, the teacher has to change her role from teacher to friend or peacemaker and even try to make the situation humorous to make young learners feel better.

TEFL listening for young learners does not comprehend all these aspects of a word because they are more difficult for young learners and have to be learnt over much more time. However, it is essential that young learners learn many words. According to Kwiatkowska's argument: …teaching listening at this level is a very important element of teaching English, because young learners, knowing more and more words, can better communicate with other young learners. [Kwiatkowska 2007:2]

Moreover, "without grammar very little can be conveyed, without listening nothing can be conveyed. That is, without grammar, young learners can try to communicate with others and to express their opinions, but without listening, they cannot say anything. Teachers of EFL need to take into account that young learners have already learnt a first language and that it enables them to relate meanings of words of both languages and as Pinter argues, they may "acquire through hearing and experiencing lots of English, in much the same way as they acquire their first language". Another aspect that should be taken into account is that "helping the child to learn and develop becomes more important than simply teaching the language" since young learners usually want their teachers be a helper or a facilitator, rather than an authority that simply gives them new knowledge. [Baker, 2005:35]

Rendering to Phillips' opinion, one characteristic is that young learners "are quick to learn words… This may be because words have tangible, immediate meanings…" [Phillips, 1993: 74], or because "the word is a recognizable linguistic unit for young learners in their first language and so they will notice words in the new language". For these reasons, the listening that young learners between five and seven years old are expected to learn is basic vocabulary such as greetings, classroom objects, members of the family, numbers, colours, etc. which are used in a context that is familiar to young learners. Consequently, young learners begin to discover that another language or languages exist by which they can communicate with others.

It is also important to consider the processes young learners are going through. Jean Piaget pondered that young learners´ reasoning and understanding differ depending on their age. Based on that, he argues that …all people pass through the stages in exactly the same order. It is important to note that the age ranges associated with the stage may not apply to every child. Some young learners may reach a particular stage earlier or later than the others may. [Piaget, 1923: 35]

Similar to Piaget, Reilly and Ward consider that whom they call "very young learners", that is young learners between five and seven years old, are in the preoperational stage. [Reilly and Ward, 1997: 5]

As Cameron agrees with Piaget's ideas that "five year olds learning a foreign language need very concrete listening that connects with objects they can handle or see…" This is because young learners begin to familiarize with the world and need to use language to socialize with their peers. [Cameron, 2001: 81] This does not only happen in their first language, but in English too. For this reason, it is important that young learners learn a wide range of listening to communicate with others in context. In order to contextualize the listening, we need to use different ways to teach it.

Some of the more common ways to teach EFL listening are by means of translation, real things, actions (gesture), pictures (illustrations, posters), use of synonymy and definition, authentic materials, storytelling, games, using readings, etc.[2]

However, not all of these ways to teach EFL listening are adequate for very young learners. The ones that are used with them are real things, pictures, authentic materials, storytelling, actions and games. This study focuses on real things, pictures, authentic materials, storytelling and games, which we think, will be very useful for teaching listening during our research. The reason for not using actions (gestures) as a single way of teaching EFL listening is that they are also involved in authentic materials and games. Although games and storytelling are not considered by some authors as techniques to teach listening, for the purposes of our research, we will refer to games and storytelling as teaching techniques. [1997:6]

Authentic materials are a good way to introduce listening because learners love them and learn the words by singing. They also help young learners to develop listening skills and learn the pronunciation of the words. Furthermore, as Thornbury argues, they are useful to relax young learners when they are restless. Teachers can use the same authentic material as a warm up in different classes to create a routine and to revise listening. Finally, authentic materials worked very well with the groups, so we can say that as well as pictures, authentic materials worked well with big groups. [2002:12]

Realia is maybe one of the most useful ways to teach listening because it uses “authentic material” refers to realia in these terms: “Objects (sometimes called ‘real things) are an ideal way of showing the meaning of English words for concreting things”. In other words, realia is the use of real objects such as stuffed toys to teach animals or plastic or real fruits and vegetables to teach food. It involves young learners using their senses, for example, the sense of touch to identify some textures, the sense of smell-to-smell the fruits and the sense of sight to observe and identify some objects.

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