



Effect of using Authentic Audio Materials on EFL Students' Listening Comprehension: First Year Social Sciences Students at Jimma University in Focus

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ABSTRACT

Listening is a receptive skill. To be successful at higher learning institutions where English is a medium of instruction, EFL students should have good command of English one of which is EFL listening comprehension. This study dealt with assessing Effect of using Authentic Audio Materials on EFL Students' Listening Comprehension: First Year Social Sciences Students at Jimma University in Focus. Consequently, the main objective of this study was to assess the effect of using Authentic Audio Materials on EFL Students' listening comprehension skills focusing on first year, undergraduate students of Jimma University. To conduct the study, a quasi-experimental study design was employed. Therefore, two intact groups were randomly selected among first year undergraduate, Social Sciences students of Jimma University in 2021 and assigned into treatment and control groups. During the intervention, the treatment group was taught using selected authentic audio materials while the control group was taught using the conventional Communicative English Language Skills-I module. Next, the quantitative data were collected using listening comprehension test and analyzed using Independent Samples T-test. The result of the T-test showed that there is a statistically significant difference in using authentic audio materials on EFL students' listening comprehension ($t(75) = 8.187, p=0.001$). Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected and the research hypothesis was accepted and hence, it is possible to conclude that using authentic audio materials can improve students' listening comprehension. Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends using authentic audio materials in EFL listening classes.

Key words: Audio, Authentic, comprehension, listening, processing, skill

INTRODUCTION

This study was mainly aimed at assessing Effect of using Authentic Audio Materials on EFL Students' Listening Comprehension: First Year Social Sciences Students at Jimma University in Focus. Language is a means of communication (Krashen, 1981). Thus, in the current era of globalization, development of language proficiency plays a great role to achieve goals in life. Consequently, to have effective communication and exchange of thought, one has to master the skills of a target language. Besides, developing English language listening skills is crucial for students in general and university students in particular for a country like Ethiopia where English is a medium of instruction. Furthermore, since English is a language of the international community, mastering its skills is mandatory and it has various benefits.

Learning a foreign language is a long and intricate process. In relation to foreign language learning, listening is at the heart of effective communication. Besides, in language acquisition, listening comes first than speaking (Patel & Jain, 2008; Nation & Newton, 2009). This means that listening provides the basis for the other language skills (Nation & Newton, 2009). Therefore, acquiring a basic knowledge of listening comprehension skills is a way for learning other skills too. So, when students listen to certain languages effectively, they learn grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and other skills (Hadijah & Shalawati, 2016). However, many EFL learners do not listen and comprehend spoken English well and they suffer from it. As a result, communication fails and eventually, the message will be misunderstood and the sender may be frustrated (Mahi, 2017). That is why the current researcher tried to investigate effect of using authentic audio materials on EFL

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students' listening comprehension. Therefore, to have effective communication and better understanding of spoken language, EFL learners need to develop effective listening comprehension skills so as to be successful in their academics.

What inspired the researchers to conduct this study was that from a long time teaching experience of EFL at one of Ethiopian's Higher learning institution, the researchers observed that the EFL students' have great difficulties of listening to lecturers while they teach in the classroom. Furthermore, the researchers have also scrutinized that the Communicative English Language Skills - I module (FLEn 1011) by which the EFL students learn lacks authentic audio materials. Consequently, lack of effective EFL listening comprehension skills to understand what they learn in the classroom, affects the students' overall academic performance resulting in poor comprehension skills and lower grades. Therefore, these were the reasons that motivated the researchers to conduct the study. Thus, the researchers taught on ways of improving students' EFL listening comprehension skills one of which can be supporting the listening activities with authentic audio materials. As a result, the current researchers formulated the following research hypotheses:

H₀: There is no statistically significant difference in listening comprehension between students who are taught listening using authentic audio materials and students who are taught listening through the conventional method.

H₁: There is a statistically significant difference in listening comprehension between students who are taught listening using authentic audio materials and students who are taught listening through the conventional method.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Listening is one of the key language skills which have to be mastered for communication and it is an integrated ability that requires a number of overlapping psycholinguistic abilities such as linguistic processing, semantic processing and pragmatic processing (Rost, 2011; Pan, 2016). Listening skills can be improved by increasing awareness about its importance and knowledge of the processes involved in it (Kotzman & Kotzman, 2008). In the past, listening was unfairly neglected throughout literature, and it was considered as a passive skill although currently, this view has been changed (Sabet & Mahsefat, 2012). As a result, as an essential part of macro-language skills, listening is a skill that deserves equal treatment with the other skills. Therefore, learners have to develop their

listening comprehension skills to comprehend a spoken text easily. Therefore, to help EFL students develop their listening comprehension skills, instructors have to support their teaching by teaching aids one of which is using authentic audio materials.

Listening comprehension is a very complex process since many factors such as listening materials, the process of listening, teaching procedures; personal factors etc can affect it (Pan, 2016). As a result, to measure listening comprehension, we must first understand how the process works (Buck, 2001; Jordens, 2006). To comprehend what they are listening, listeners must be able to receive auditory signals (i.e., input) and break them up into linguistic units (morphemes, words). Listening can be conducted by playing the audios from computers since students can easily learn and practice through them. Because listening is an active and complex process of constructing meaning, listeners can better comprehend the spoken text by applying linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge to the incoming sounds (Chang, 2012; Buck, 2001). Good listeners sometimes make calculated guess and hold the information in their memory since ambiguity is sometimes unavoidable (Wilson, 2008). Accordingly, listeners have to retrieve the meaning of those linguistic units from their long-term memory. Moreover, learners need to have extensive EFL listening practice; the more they are exposed to listening practice, the better their listening comprehension ability will be. This statement shows that active listening requires concentration and effort (Aaron & Ely (1994).

However, many studies confirm that the listening comprehension skills of university students who learn English as a Foreign language is poor. This could be due to several factors such as assuming listening as the most difficult language skill, considering listening as a Cinderella skill, lack of extensive listening practice, giving less attention to the listening lessons, not supplying classroom listening tasks with appropriate authentic audio materials and etc. Therefore, university students who learn EFL need to drastically improve their listening comprehension skills since this will contribute to their overall success in their academics. Woottipong (2014) states that poor listening skills of the students results in lower grades, incorrect assignments, lost job opportunities and the likes. As a result, the listening comprehension skills of university students who learn English as EFL need to be improved.

Listening comprehension skill is the most significant language skill which needs to be developed by

students especially in higher learning institutions where English is taught as a Foreign Language and where it is used as a medium of instruction. Thus, if students do not have good command of the language, they cannot understand what their professors (lecturers) teach them in the classroom which in turn results in an overall poor academic performance. Additionally, most of the time, EFL students cannot understand the instructions given to them by their professors to carryout classroom tasks. This implies that, if students cannot understand the message of the speaker, they cannot perform the tasks given to them in the right path as well (Maghsoudi & Madani, 2014).

Harmer (2007), states that listening is one of the receptive language skills by which one extracts information. This statement implies that listening is one way of getting information; so, through listening, students can gather information which can help them learn every academic subject. Consequently, listening skills are considered very important in boosting up the academic achievement level of the students (Alrawashdeh& Al-Sayeed, (2017).

However, from the current researchers' long years' teaching experience and observation, the target populations of the study depict poor over all academic performance in general and poor EFL listening comprehension skills' performance in particular. This is evident from the fact that the majority of first year students joining universities in the target area do not listen well to what their EFL instructors teach in the classroom. This is one of the reasons that initiated the current researcher to conduct the study.

Instructors who teach listening skills have to use essential teaching materials which support the teaching of listening in their EFL classroom; one of which is authentic audio material. Listening comprehension can be improved with increased exposure to authentic speech as it significantly increases learners' on task behavior (Herron &Seay, 1991; Peacock, 1997). Sabet and Mahesefat (2012) conducted a similar study at elementary school and the result reveals that students who were taught using authentic audio materials performed better in their listening comprehension. However, there is a scarcity of study in the target area. Therefore, that is the other reason the researcher was interested to conduct the study on *"Effect of using Authentic Audio Materials on EFL Students' Listening Comprehension: first Year Social Sciences Students at Jimma University in Focus."*

Liu (2016) affirms that language teachers should understand the concept of authenticity, and use authentic materials through graded tasks in their classrooms. However, the Communicative English Language Skills - I module by which the target population (first year, undergraduate students) learn does not have authentic audio materials; rather, it contains pedagogical materials which are scripts to be read by instructors for the students. So, the listening texts included in the module are academic texts which instructors read for the students so that the students will do the listening questions following the listening sessions. Gilmore (2007) verifies that the language presented in text books are poor representations of the real world. As a result, the teaching module lacks authentic audio materials.

Gilmore (2007) defines an "authentic text" as, "...a stretch of real language produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort." From this definition, it is apparent that authentic materials must be produced by real people and the target audience should be real people who are native to the language itself. Polat and Eristi(2019) also define authentic materials as materials whose creator, producer, and target audience are individuals speaking a language as their mother tongue and the ones which are not developed specifically for the purpose of teaching or learning a particular language and containing written, verbal, audio-visual elements reflecting the communication examples related to real life. From this particular definition, it can be understood that authentic materials refer to the production made by native speakers and aimed to fulfill certain social values. These can include poems, television listening, articles, newspaper, pop song, magazine, and advertisements (Peacock, 1997).

There is an ongoing debate among scholars with regard to what the term "Authenticity" refers to and whether authentic materials help EFL learners improve the target language. With this regard, Gilmore (2007) defines "authenticity" in the following way: "An authentic text is a stretch of real language, produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort." From this definition, it is apparent that the source of the discourse and the context of the production are essential to categorize texts into authentic or non-authentic

Besides, Hussien and Elttayef (2018) insist that using authentic materials in EFL classes makes the activities enjoyable and the students motivated. This helps teachers bring the target language and culture

to EFL classes so that the learners will benefit the best out of it. Authentic materials also provide a rich linguistic diet, vocabulary and etc thereby improving the students' listening comprehension skills (Shuang, 2014; Mousavi & Iravani 2012). Authentic materials create interest and motivation to EFL learners, reduce the dullness of contrived text materials, learn a target language as it is used outside the classroom (Mohammed & Ibrahim, 2019; Ahmadi, 2016).

On the other hand, few scholars are against the use of authentic materials in EFL classroom. For example, Azri and Al-Rashdi (2014) claim that although authentic materials are among very essential tools a teacher must use in class, they may be culturally biased, contain complex words and structures. This statement implies that since authentic materials contain language as it is naturally spoken by native speakers, it may contain many words that may not be easily understood by EFL learners and it also portrays the culture of native speakers. Nevertheless, Hussien and Elttayef, (2018) affirm that using authentic materials bring the target language and culture closer. However, Guo (2012) also argues that authentic materials can contain complex vocabularies and structures for lower grades. It means that lower grade learners may not easily comprehend the words spoken by native speakers. On the contrary, Mohammed and Ibrahim, (2019) argue that authentic materials are essential for language learning at all levels.

There are only few local studies conducted on a related topic; thus, there is a scarcity of local literature. Kochito (2013) conducted a local study on the use of authentic materials in teaching listening skills to college students and found that even though instructors and students were aware of the use of authentic materials, they rarely used them because of some restricting factors such as workloads, class size and the like. The finding further revealed that authentic materials highly motivated the students and gave them a sense of achievement. However, this research was a survey while the current research is quasi-experimental. Besides, Kochito's study did not investigate the effect of authentic audio materials on students' listening self-efficacy.

Another local study conducted on the use of authentic materials by Mulugeta (2019) found that almost all teachers did not incorporate authentic listening materials into the English classrooms because the textbook is bulky in its content. The study was conducted at secondary and preparatory school level, and it employed mixed research design. Therefore, one can understand that even the few local researches

conducted are not quasi-experimental. As a result, one can understand that there is a scarcity of research conducted on the use of authentic listening materials at tertiary level in Ethiopia. Furthermore, there is a scarcity of local researches conducted on the topic under investigation in Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions in general and the current study setting in particular.

Besides, as far as the knowledge of the current researchers' goes, there is no a quasi-experimental research conducted in Ethiopia on the Effect of using Authentic Audio Materials on EFL Students' Listening Comprehension with reference to first year University students. In addition, the module that is currently used for teaching the target population is not equipped with authentic audio materials. For this reason, the researchers were interested to study the effect of using authentic audio materials on EFL students' listening comprehension.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study Setting

The study was conducted in Jimma University, Ethiopia. Jimma University (JU) is a public higher education institution established in December 1999. Jimma University comprises the following colleges and institutes: College of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine, College of Business and Economics, College of Law, College of Governance and Development Studies, College of Natural Sciences, College of Social Sciences and Humanities, College of Medical Sciences, College of Public Health and College of Other Health Sciences, Institute of Health Sciences, Jimma Institute of Technology and School of Graduate Studies. Accordingly, this study was conducted in Jimma University, Main campus where first year Social Science students were assigned.

Design of the study

The study employed a quasi-experimental design. Best and Kahn (1995) state that quasi-experimental design provides control of when and to whom measurement is applied and it is often used in classroom experiments when treatment and control groups are naturally assembled groups as intact classes, which may be similar. Besides, the study made use of quantitative approach.

Population, Sample and Sampling Technique

The study populations for this study were first year undergraduate students who joined Jimma University in 2021. Then, from all first year students, Social Sciences students were chosen randomly using lottery method. Then, two groups among the total 19 groups were randomly selected and assigned to

treatment group and control groups since the study design was quasi-experimental. The treatment group contained 37 participants while the control group contained 40 participants since they are intact groups. Therefore, totally, 77 participants took part in the study.

With regard to data contamination, since the students are first year and new to the campus and the environment, their chance of knowing each other across sections is very low. Besides, even though the participants are in the same campus, they were learning in different buildings which were far from each other. Moreover, the research participants were not told that they were going to take the same test as a posttest until the intervention was over.

All the participants learned English as a subject starting from grade 1-12 by the same curriculum across the country. Furthermore, all the participants took the same grade 10 completion examination and the same grade 12 University Entrance Examination. During the pre-intervention, the same listening comprehension test was given both for the treatment and control groups and no statistically significant difference was found. From these facts, we can understand that the groups are comparable. Following the pre-intervention results, the experiment was carried out. After the intervention was completed, a post-intervention test was given. During the post intervention, the same listening comprehension test was administered to both the treatment and control groups as a posttest.

Data Collection Instruments

In order to collect pertinent data for the study, a Listening Comprehension Test was used. The Listening Comprehension Test was mainly used to check the participants' level of English comprehension before and after the experiment.

With regard to the listening comprehension test, the test which contains 30 items was set from listening section text of the IELTS 2019 examination. A section of the listening script was taken from the IELTS 2019 and some modifications were made on the text to deal with the difficulty level (i.e some difficult vocabularies were changed). Then, the items were shown to Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL) experts for appropriateness, comments and suggestions. After taking necessary comments from the experts, the text was read and recorded by the researcher's own voice. The recording was done because the original native speaker's pronunciation may be difficult for the participants to comprehend easily. Following this, the

recorded audio was shown again to four (4) Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL) experts (two PhD holders who are at the rank of Associate Professor and two PhD holders who are at the rank of Assistant Professor) for further improvement on voice quality and level of difficulty so that it will suit to the participants' level of understanding.

The items of the listening comprehension test comprised four (4) parts. Part-I is table completion and fill in the blanks (10 items), part- II is True/False items (5 items), part- III contains Matching items (5 items) and finally, Part- IV comprises Multiple Choice Questions (10 items). Totally, the test contains 30 items and each of them holds one mark. So, the result was computed out of 30%. The table completion part was adopted from the IELTS 2019 listening test. However, the other three parts (The true/false items, matching items and multiple choice items) were set by the researcher from the listening text taken from the IELTS 2019 examination. Accordingly, the listening question items were repeatedly reviewed and commented by TEFL experts and necessary adjustments (modifications) were made with regards to suitability, level of difficulty and related issues ahead of using them.

For the sake of maintaining validity, the test was repeatedly checked by TEFL experts and necessary adjustments were made accordingly. To check the test's reliability, a reliability test was run and a Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.958 was found. The result shows that the instrument is reliable.

Methods of Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data obtained from the participants, inferential statistics specifically Independent Samples T-test was used. The Independent Samples T-test was run to calculate the data obtained through the quantitative instrument using SPSS version 23.0. Then, the result was reported in terms of the 0.05 significance level (cut off point).

Ethical Considerations

Prior to launching the data collection process, a letter of consent was obtained from the Research and Post Graduate Coordinating Office of College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Jimma University and communicated to the participants. Thus, the researcher first explained the purpose and objective of conducting the research to the participants and told them that they can withdraw at any time if they are not willing to participate. They were also told that the data collected will be only used for the research purpose. Besides, for the sake of confidentiality and

anonymity, the participants were not expected to write their names on the test. Finally, data were collected only after consent was obtained from the participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pretest Result

T-test results of the participants' Listening Comprehension

The experiment took place on first year undergraduate students of Jimma University in 2021. Pretest and posttest were administered to both treatment and control groups.

Group Statistics					
	Group	N	Mean	Std. <u>Deviation</u>	Std. Error <u>Mean</u>
Listening Comprehension	Treatment	37	15.2703	5.10799	0.83974
	Control	40	14.1500	5.64574	0.89266

Table 1. Results of the pretest for the participants' listening comprehension

As it is depicted in Table 1 above, 37 study participants took part in the treatment group and 40 participants took part in the control group on listening comprehension test. The mean and standard deviation values of the two groups were calculated. The results showed that the mean and standard deviation of the treatment group were found (**m=15.2703, sd=5.10799**) and the mean and standard

deviation of the control group were found (**m=14.1500, sd=5.64574**). The results suggest that both the treatment and control groups are similar in terms of their listening comprehension before the intervention.

			Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
Listening Comprehension	Groups		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference
	Treatment (N = 37)	Equal variances assumed	.114	.737	.910	75	.365	1.12027
	Control (N = 40)							
		Equal variances not assumed			.914	74.96 7	.364	1.12027

Table 2. Independent Sample T-test pretest results of the participants' listening comprehension

An independent samples *t* test was calculated to compare the listening comprehension mean scores of the treatment group with that of the control group. No statistically significant difference was found ($t(75) = .910$, $p=0.365$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted implying that both the treatment and the control groups had similar listening comprehension skills before the experiment.

Posttest result

Following the results of the pretest which showed that the two groups have no statistically significant difference in listening comprehension, the

intervention was launched. During the experiment, the treatment group was taught listening using selected authentic audio materials while the control group was taught listening using the conventional method. After completing the intervention, the researcher administered the same listening comprehension test for both treatment and control groups and the test was marked out of 30%. Subsequently, an Independent Samples T-test results of the test were calculated and the results are depicted below:

Group Statistics

	Group	N	Mean	Std. <u>Deviation</u>	Std. Error <u>Mean</u>
Listening Comprehension	Treatment	37	18.6486	2.73065	.44892
	Control	40	12.5250	3.71406	.58724

Table 3. Results of the posttest for the participants' listening comprehension

As it can be seen from table 3 above, 37 participants took part in the treatment group while 40 participants took part in the control group. The mean of the two groups were compared to verify if there is any difference following the intervention. Consequently, the mean and the standard deviation values of the

treatment group were found ($m=18.6486$, $sd=2.73065$) and the mean and the standard deviation values of the control group were found ($m=12.5250$, $sd=3.71406$). This result suggests that using authentic audio materials in EFL class improves students' listening comprehension.

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
Listening Comprehension	Groups		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
	Treatment (N = 37)	Equal variances assumed	2.030	.158	8.187	75	.001	6.12365
	Control (N = 40)							
		Equal variances not assumed			8.284	71.462	.000	6.12365

Table 4.Independent Sample T-test posttest results of the participants' listening comprehension

An independent-samples t-test was computed comparing the mean scores of the treatment and control groups for using authentic audio materials on the participants' level of English listening comprehension after the intervention and found a statistically significant difference between the means of the two groups ($t(75) = 8.187, p=0.001$) as shown in table 4 above. As a result, the null hypothesis was rejected and the research hypothesis was accepted. The result implies that using authentic audio materials in EFL classroom improves students' listening comprehension.

Discussion

With regard to the effect of using authentic audio materials on the participants' listening comprehension, the Independent Samples T-test result showed that there is a statistically significant difference in that the mean score of the treatment group is significantly higher than the mean scores of the control group (See table – 2). The result reveals that using authentic audio materials has a positive effect on improving the participants' English language listening comprehension skills.

Listening comprehension can be improved with increased exposure to authentic speech as it significantly increases learners' on task behavior (Herron and Seay, 1991; Peacock, 1997). Consequently, using authentic audio materials while teaching listening skills in the classroom, can make students participate in different activities and this can help them improve their English language listening skills. As a result, it can improve the participants' overall academic achievements since the medium of instruction is English in the study setting and this in turn ensures quality of education.

The finding of the present study is also similar with a study by Dewi (2015) in which he found that authentic materials have positive influence on students' achievement in listening comprehension. Therefore, if students are frequently exposed to authentic audio materials, their EFL listening comprehension skills will gradually develop.

Wootipong (2014) states that poor listening skills of the students results in lower grades, incorrect assignments, and lost job opportunities. As a result, paying attention to how best students learn EFL listening comprehension skills should be given priority. In line with this, the current researcher also emphasizes that using authentic audio materials

which makes use of real language use is mandatory in EFL classes.

Listening comprehension is the centerpiece of learning a language (Henderson, 2017; Vandergrift, 2004). Moreover, listening comprehension affects the EFL students' success not only on English course but also in all other academic subjects they learn since English is the medium of instruction in Ethiopian higher learning institutions. Therefore, unless the listening comprehension skill of the students is advanced, they may not be successful in the academic subjects they learn in a university. This in turn will result in poor quality education, high dropout rate and a graduate with poor profiles.

As a result, to produce qualified professionals in diverse disciplines, attention needs to be given to the listening comprehension skills of first year students since it helps them to be successful during their stay at higher learning institutions. Hamouda (2013) also states that without understanding the input through listening, students cannot learn anything. From this statement, it is vivid that students have to listen well to classroom lecture and understand what their Professors (lecturers) teach them.

CONCLUSION

The objective of this study was to investigate the Effect of using Authentic Audio Materials on EFL Students' Listening Comprehension: First Year Social Sciences Students at Jimma University in Focus. In conclusion, the research hypothesis is accepted following the result of the study. In order to obtain data for this study, listening comprehension test was used. During the intervention, the treatment group was taught listening skills using authentic audio materials while the control group was taught using the conventional method (listening scripts from the Communicative English Language Skills - I module). After administering the same listening comprehension test for both the treatment and control groups following the completion of the intervention, the data were analyzed using inferential statistics. The Independent Samples T-test result showed that there is a statistically significant difference of using authentic audio materials on EFL students' listening comprehension skills ($t(75) = 8.187, p=0.001$). As a result, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the research hypothesis stated as "There is a statistically significant difference in listening comprehension between students who are taught listening using

authentic audio materials and students who are taught listening through the conventional method.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommends the following:

1. EFL instructors who teach listening at Ethiopian higher learning institutions should use authentic audio materials in their classrooms besides to teaching the theoretical aspects of listening.
2. The Ethiopian Ministry of Education has to include authentic audio materials in the EFL curriculum particularly in Communicative English Skills – I module.
3. EFL instructors who teach communicative English Language Skills- I have to access different authentic audio materials online and design listening tasks using them so that they will use them in their classes.
4. The authentic audio materials that will be used by instructors have to be selected very carefully considering the level of difficulty and appropriateness to the objectives of the lesson.

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