

**THE EFFECT OF THE USE OF AUTHENTIC LISTENING MATERIALS
(listening component of the IELTS practice materials) ON THE LISTENING COMPREHENSION
OF JUNIOR EDUCATION STUDENTS**

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INTRODUCTION

Among the challenges which confront many English teachers today, particularly in the Philippines is the deterioration of the English proficiency of students. This is attested by Gutierrez (2006) who cited in his article *The Demise of English*, that a survey of the Social Weather Station shows that for the past twelve years, only one of every three Filipinos is capable of communicating intelligibly in English.

Another challenge is the question of being able to prepare students in getting a job after earning a degree. Despite the mushrooming of call centers which gives graduates employment opportunities, particularly for those who have developed good listening and speaking skills, this nevertheless, cannot be taken as a good reason not to continue looking for ways to teach the subject better. As yet again, survey results are not at all encouraging because according to Ramota (2006), of the Institute of National Studies, in his article entitled *Economic Woes Drive Bright Graduates to Call Center*, for every one hundred applicants in the call center industry, only five to ten get hired which means that these are the only ones who meet the listening and speaking standards required.

Thus, teachers should be able to provide learners with the opportunities of developing their communication skills, particularly, their listening skills together with speaking, reading and writing as well and, achieving this would mean having them listen to authentic listening materials which familiarizes them to a variety of English accents, such that when confronted with these utterances outside the classroom, they are able to cope socio-linguistically or otherwise so that they are able to comprehend native speakers.

Why listening? As Vandergrift (2007, Dunkel, 1991 in Ellis, 2003) puts it, listening comprehension lies at the heart of language learning, but it is the least understood and least researched skill. Also, given normal circumstances, even if listening is the first among the four macro-skills, which human beings develop, and even if it is considered as the most basic communication skill, which according to Vogely (1995 in Pascual, 2007) is also the most frequently used skill in the teaching and learning process, it is nevertheless given less importance and is likewise less taught since most teachers believe that listening comprehension develops by itself.

Perhaps teachers might have forgotten that listening needs to be taught together with speaking, reading and writing because possessing effective listening skills to meet the demands that occur daily is an advantage. In fact, Morley (1991 in Pascual 2007) attests that nearly ninety percent of class time from kindergarten to high school, to the university life is spent on listening. Besides, Morley continues by saying that through the normal course of a day, listening is used nearly twice as speaking and four to five times as much as reading and writing.

This being the case, it is imperative that English teachers take it upon themselves to develop listening skills among students instead of just waiting for the skill to develop by itself. Thus, Brown (2001) posits that developing the skill of listening comprehension is extremely important since students with good listening skills are better able to participate effectively in class.

Furthermore, the comprehension-approach methodologists also assert that the goal of second and foreign language instruction is the development of communicative competence and oral fluency which can be achieved by *putting the horse (listening comprehension) before the cart (oral production)*. This means that developing proficiency in listening comprehension is related to proficiency in speaking (Brown, 2001).

Hence, Guariento and Morley (2001) propose that if students are to use English to communicate effectively in the real world, they have to experience the language as it is used for real communication among native speakers and this can be done through the use of authentic listening materials in English classrooms.

This is where teachers have to come in and provide students with listening materials which develop listening comprehension, even as research in the listening process has yet to unearth a convincing or conclusive, all encompassing description of how listening comprehension is actually achieved.

Meanwhile, teachers have to move on and draw from their experiences and observations of their students and decide on what listening materials they think are best in developing comprehension, especially when there are a lot of materials and resources to choose from such as the authentic listening materials readily available in the market.

More so, having students listen to a variety of authentic listening materials gives them the ability to comprehend native speakers in various kind of speech situations like when native speakers talk at a normal rate or at a faster rate.

Given the foregoing instances, students will be able to cope, unlike some students who often panic when they hear spoken English on television, on radio or in situations where speech is fast and nothing is repeated (Pascual, 2007).

It is in this light then, that this study is conducted so as to contribute to this body of knowledge and be a vehicle in developing students' listening comprehension because the researcher believes that the listening comprehension of students improves when they are made to listen to authentic listening materials, such as the resources employed in this study which are adapted from the listening component of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) practice materials.

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