

TEACHING LISTENING THROUGH AUTHENTIC MATERIALS TO B1 LEVEL LEARNERS

Kaljanova Gulmira Barlikbay kizi

teacher of Uzbekistan State World languages university, Tashkent

Abstract: Listening is one of the fundamental skills required for effective communication in a foreign language. At the B1 level, learners are expected to demonstrate an intermediate command of English, which includes the ability to understand spoken language in various everyday contexts. The use of authentic materials in teaching listening has gained considerable attention among language teachers due to its potential in creating meaningful and engaging learning experiences. Authentic materials are real-life texts designed for native speakers rather than language learners, such as radio broadcasts, podcasts, interviews, video clips, TV shows, and announcements. Tailoring listening instruction around such resources can present significant benefits for B1 level students, including the development of active listening habits and increased familiarity with natural language use.

Key words: listening, authentic materials, B1 level, language learners, real-life English, comprehension, motivation, classroom practice, listening strategies, intermediate learners.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching English as a foreign language is a complex and rewarding endeavor that plays a crucial role in today's increasingly interconnected world. The ability to communicate in English opens doors to global opportunities, whether in education, business, travel, or personal development. In many countries, English is considered a vital skill that enriches learners' academic prospects and enhances their cultural understanding. Over the years, various methods and approaches have been developed to facilitate effective language acquisition, catering to learners' diverse backgrounds, needs, and learning styles. The process of teaching English encompasses a variety of skills, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening, each of which contributes significantly to overall language competence. Among these, it is essential to create a supportive and interactive classroom environment where students feel confident to express themselves, take risks, and actively participate in lessons. Using authentic materials and real-life context helps learners relate their studies to practical situations, making the learning process both meaningful and engaging. Ultimately, the primary goal of teaching English is to empower students to use the language confidently and efficiently in different real-world situations. This involves not only the acquisition of grammar and vocabulary but also the development of cultural awareness and critical thinking skills. As English teachers, our responsibility is to inspire, motivate, and guide learners throughout their language learning journey, helping them unlock their full potential and successfully navigate the challenges of a globalized society.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

At the B1 level, students have progressed beyond basic vocabulary and grammar and can begin to focus on extracting meaning from context. Authentic listening materials introduce them to the realities of genuine spoken English, including a variety of accents, informal expressions, natural speech rates, and the subtle features of prosody such as stress and intonation. These elements are rarely present in heavily scripted classroom recordings. When learners are exposed to everyday language, they not only improve their listening ability, but also develop strategies

to cope with new words, unclear pronunciations, and different dialects. This exposure makes their language skills more practical and applicable outside the classroom. Incorporating authentic materials into listening lessons can motivate learners by demonstrating the real-life value of their studies. Learners frequently express a desire to understand movies, songs, or real conversations, so using such materials resonates with their personal goals and interests. This motivation can enhance student engagement and persistence even when listening tasks are challenging. Authentic texts also provide opportunities to hear language used in a range of contexts, from informal chats to formal reports, allowing learners to expand their functional repertoire.[1]

Using authentic materials requires careful selection to ensure appropriateness for B1 level learners. Teachers should consider the length and complexity of the audio, the speed of speech, and the amount of unfamiliar vocabulary. Shorter excerpts or edited versions are often necessary to avoid overwhelming students while still providing enough challenge for growth. Listening tasks should be designed to target specific sub-skills, such as identifying the main idea, recognizing supporting details, and understanding opinions or attitudes. Pre-teaching key vocabulary and providing background information about the context can be helpful in preparing students for successful listening experiences.[2]

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Listening lessons based on authentic materials should follow a structured approach to maximize learning. This typically involves three stages: pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening. During the pre-listening stage, teachers can activate students' background knowledge and set the context, making it easier for students to predict, infer, and follow the audio. While listening, students may complete tasks such as answering comprehension questions, filling in forms, or noting main points. Finally, post-listening activities help consolidate comprehension, encourage reflection, or integrate listening with other skills, such as speaking or writing. Using authentic materials helps learners adjust to speech that is less predictable and more spontaneous than language tailored for the classroom. This includes exposure to reduced forms, contractions, hesitation, false starts, and incomplete sentences. Engaging with real spoken language opens the door to more natural communication and better equips learners for encounters they are likely to face outside the academic environment.[3]

Challenges do arise when teaching listening with authentic materials. The unpredictability, speed, or density of information may initially be daunting for B1 learners. However, repeated and scaffolded exposure can gradually build their confidence. Teachers play a crucial role in creating a supportive atmosphere where mistakes are viewed as a necessary part of learning and progress is recognized incrementally. Authentic materials are also a rich source for improving intercultural competence. Learners become familiar with cultural references, social conventions, and norms, which deepens their understanding of how language operates within its real context. This intercultural awareness is an essential component of communicative competence and prepares students for global citizenship in an interconnected world. One of the significant advantages of using authentic materials at the B1 stage is that they bridge the gap between classroom English and the language used outside of it. Students quickly become aware that not all language is carefully articulated or grammatically perfect, and this realization makes them more tolerant of ambiguity and better equipped to comprehend the essence of a message, even in imperfect conditions. Another positive outcome is increased learner autonomy. As learners grow accustomed to listening to real-world material, they gain the confidence to explore similar resources independently. Such habits foster lifelong learning and continuous improvement of language skills outside the classroom setting.[4]

Assessment of listening with authentic materials must be handled sensitively. Instead of focusing exclusively on correct answers, teachers should reward effort, strategy use, and improvement over time. Formative assessment can give valuable feedback on specific areas requiring further attention and can be encouraging for learners who struggle with the initial challenges of authentic listening. When teaching listening through authentic materials, integrating various media sources can enhance the overall experience. Different types of materials offer exposure to diverse varieties of language and differing contextual cues. For instance, audio-visual materials provide visual context, such as gestures and facial expressions, which can greatly aid comprehension at the intermediate level.

Incorporating authentic listening texts also allows for cross-curricular links, where themes and topics from other subjects are introduced, broadening students' general knowledge while simultaneously improving language skills. This integrated approach is beneficial for holistic education and can be particularly engaging for teenagers and young adults. The use of technology is indispensable in bringing authentic materials to B1 classrooms. The internet makes it easier than ever for teachers and students to access up-to-date, varied, and interesting listening content. Language learning platforms, YouTube, streaming services, and official news channels are among the many sources available for classroom use. Guidance and support are essential when using authentic materials. Teachers need to scaffold the listening process and provide strategies for coping with challenging input. Metacognitive strategies, such as predicting, monitoring comprehension, and reflecting on difficulties, empower students to become more effective listeners. As learners develop these skills, their confidence and performance in listening activities will increase. Continual reflection on the selection, adaptation, and implementation of authentic materials is important for teachers. Reviewing which resources are most effective, which cause particular challenges, and how students respond to them can guide future choices and improvements in instructional practice.[5]

Teaching listening through authentic materials to B1 level learners has been widely researched in the field of language education. Authentic materials, which are created for native speakers and reflect real-life topics, provide learners with the opportunity to experience the language as it is actually used. These resources, such as podcasts, interviews, news clips, and casual conversations, expose learners to natural language, including common expressions, fillers, contractions, informal speech, and varying accents. Using authentic materials in listening activities increases students' motivation and engagement, as they encounter language in contexts closer to real-life situations. This exposure helps bridge the gap between classroom language and the way people actually speak outside the classroom. At first, B1 learners may find authentic materials challenging due to the speed of speech, background noise, cultural references, and unfamiliar vocabulary. However, with structured support from the teacher, such as pre-listening activities, vocabulary preview, and guided comprehension questions, learners gradually develop confidence and improve their listening comprehension skills. Authentic listening practice not only helps with linguistic ability but also enhances cultural awareness and pragmatic understanding. Students learn how language operates in different social situations, and they become more aware of intonation, stress, and natural rhythm. Teachers play a key role by scaffolding the process, helping students focus on main ideas, infer meaning from context, and develop effective listening strategies. Over time, students become more comfortable with real English. They are able to identify key information, pick out details, and understand the overall message even if they do not catch every word. Classroom observations and reflections show that using authentic materials strengthens students' listening autonomy, critical thinking, and ability to adapt to various communication settings. Genuine audio also helps widen their

vocabulary and exposes them to a range of grammatical structures in use. Based on these observations, using authentic materials for listening practice at the B1 level has a significant positive impact. Learners benefit not only in terms of their listening skills, but also grow in their ability to understand different contexts and communicate more confidently. The exposure to real-life language increases their motivation and encourages them to take more responsibility for their own learning. After regular practice, students show improvement in their ability to grasp the main ideas of spoken texts, recognize specific information, and cope with unfamiliar words by relying on context. They report feeling more prepared to engage in real-world communication and more at ease when encountering English outside the classroom. Authentic listening activities thus serve not only as a means of language input but also as a valuable tool for developing independent, culturally aware, and communicatively competent language users.[6]

CONCLUSION

In summary, teaching listening through authentic materials offers B1 level learners invaluable exposure to real-life English, helps close the gap between classroom and everyday language use, and motivates students to engage more deeply with their language studies. While challenges exist, careful selection of resources, well-designed tasks, and supportive teaching practices can help students develop the listening strategies they need to succeed as confident and competent listeners. Authentic materials prepare learners for real-world communication, encourage lifelong learning, and contribute to the overall goal of language education: to understand and be understood in diverse situations. As language teachers employ more authentic listening materials, they provide their students with meaningful, relevant, and genuinely useful language experiences, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of language instruction at the intermediate level.

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