The students' difficulties in understanding the authentic news items materials in the listening class

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Abstract

This objective of the research is to identify the difficulties faced by the students in understanding the authentic listening materials of the news item. The participants of the research are the second-semester undergraduate Students of the English Education Department (EED) in Universitas Nasional Karangturi Semarang 2020/2021. The research method applied in this research setting is the descriptive method. Six students are participating in this research. To collect the data of the research, a questionnaire was used. The data collected was analyzed descriptively by identifying the responses of the questionnaire to identify further the difficulties faced by the research participants. The result of the research shows that the participants, majorly, face difficulties in understanding each part of the authentic news item materials. The difficulties faced by participants are caused by the rate or speed of the native speakers' talk, the participants' vocabulary unfamiliarity, lack of vocabulary mastery, and listening strategy.

Keywords: listening skill, Authentic materials, News item.

Introduction

The success of the teaching listening process in the EFL classroom is affected by so many factors. One of the factors is the learning materials. The learning materials in the listening classroom have some crucial roles in three stages of the teaching listening process (pre-listening, main listening, and post-listening activity). In the pre-listening stage, the materials give the students exposure to students to revive their background knowledge and prepare them for the main activity in the listening class. In the main stage of the teaching listening process, the materials act as the students' center of attention that can help and assist them to achieve the learning objective. At the end of the learning stage, the post-listening activity, they are used to reinforce the students' mastery of the learning objective.

The crucial role of learning material requires the instructors of listening to be well-informed and understand the characteristics of the listening materials used in the classroom. That will lead to an effective learning process that provides the best learning experience to the students created by instructors. In the very basic concept about listening material category, based on the level of how close the material connecting to the real-life situation, there are two categories of listening materials, namely, authentic and non-authentic materials. Authentic materials refer to the materials found in the real-life or natural situation of communication. On the other hand, non-authentic materials are those listening materials that are less natural and created only for a specific teaching objective.

Most modern EFL instructors are currently encouraged to provide the students with authentic listening materials which are found in real-life communication. The use of authentic materials is based on the consideration of making students get used to real-life listening situations using English. In addition, the trend of blended learning applications also encourages instructors and contributes to the use the authentic materials which can be easily found and accessed online in social media such as *Instagram, Youtube, Facebook, and so on*. But, the use of authentic materials often causes some difficulties for

students, especially in the EFL listening class. The difficulties should be identified carefully to anticipate the problems that emerged in the class.

The authentic materials were also used in the information listening class to the second-semester students in English Education Department, Universitas Nasional Karangturi Semarang, the academic year 2020/202. One of the authentic materials is used to teach the news item text. The students are averagely in the B1 CEFR listening level category based on the previous research published in the previous edition journal. Therefore, this research is aimed to identify the difficulties faced by students and the causes in understanding the authentic listening materials of the news item.

Literature Review

The process of listening

To understand the difficulties faced by students in listening class, the nature of the listening process in a language learning context has to be understood well. Smaldino (2008) states that listening is a psychological process that begins with someone's awareness and attention to sounds or speech patterns (*receiving*), proceeds through identification and recognition of specific auditory signals (*decoding*) and ends incomprehension. This theory explains the listening process in an orderly way from a very beginning phase where people catch the sounds, receive them, and then in the end comprehend the message.

In addition, Brown (2001: 249) elaborates on eight steps involved in the listening process. They are raw speech, hearer's determination of speech type, hearer's interference, hearer's recall, hearer's literal meaning assignment, hearer's intended meaning assignment, hearer's determination, and hearer's message deletion. The theory explains in a very detailed way the process of listening. There is an involvement of the short- term memory in the raw speech step to hold the sounds from the speaker. Then, the determination of speech type, inferring the type of speech, context, and content is done in the next following steps. And at the end of the listening process, the listeners determine which information should be retained in the long-term memory and which information should be deleted.

The authentic listening materials

The next discussion will be about the nature of authentic listening materials. According to Kramsch (1993: 177), authentic materials refer to the everyday language used, it is not intended for academic purposes. In addition, according to Wallace (1992: 145), the authentic text is defined as a real-life text, not written for pedagogic learners.

There are some advantages and disadvantages of using authentic listening materials in the EFL listening class. The instructors' awareness of them will help them to anticipate the problems which may emerge during the application of the authentic materials. The list of them is presented in the following table.

Table 1. A summary of the advantages and disadvantages of using authentic materials in the listening class.

Advantages	Disadvantages
1. It can increase students' motivation and independent learning because they can easily obtain these materials from radio, movies, or television. 2. Students can have a meaningful experience with a real language 3. It present cultural understanding 4. It can provide various kinds of texts and sustain a small number of materials in listening 5. The topic can be more interesting and relevant to the current issue 6. It makes the teacher more creative in designing the lesson 7. The visual listening models can develop learners listening skills in richer language contexts. (Peacock, 1997; Porter and Robert,1981; Morrison, 1989; Guarientoand Morley, 2001; Mishan, 2005).	1. It can be too difficult. For example, the speed of the speech, hesitation, and repetition can confuse the lower level 2. It sometimes does not provide an appropriate language model for learners. It is time-consuming in preparation. Because authentic texts are generally 3. not proposed for teaching language, teachers have to design their lesson plan and make it appropriate to students. 4. Different accents, colloquial language, and pronunciation can cause problems for the learner. In real life, people speak different English accents and use informal language which is hardly found in an edited textbook. (Morrison, 2005; Hinkel, 2006; Hoven, 1999).

News item text

In this section, the concept of the news item test is presented to get a comprehensive understanding of the text. Gerot and Wignall (1995:200) state that news item is one of the factual genres. The social function of the text is to inform the readers, listeners, or viewers about events of the day, which are considered newsworthy or important. Furthermore, The characteristics of the text are summarized in the following table.

Table 3. The characteristics of news item text

No	The aspect of the text	Characteristics
1	The generic structure	a. Newsworthy event(s), recounts the event in summary form b. Background events(s), elaborate what happened to whom in what circumstances c. Source, comments by participants in, witnesses to

			and authorities, an expert on the events
2	Grammatical patterns	a.	Short, telegraphic information about the story is captured in the headline.
		b.	Use of material processes to retell the event
		c.	Use of projecting verbal processes in sources stage.
		d.	Focus on circumstances

Based on the concept in table 3, The generic structure of the news item text will be included in the collecting data of the research. The structure of the text will help to map and identify which part of the text the participants face the difficulties.

Previous Studies

Related to the topic of the research, there is a study done by Marsevani (2016) with the topic *the use of authentic materials in English as a Foreign language (EFL) Classrooms*. One of the reasearch findings is that there are several challenges faced by instructors and students when the authentic material is used in the classroom. The challenges are the unfamiliar vocabularies, strange accent and dialect, and complexstructures. The finding of that research can be an insight of conducting this study.

Methodology

Research Data

The method of the research is descriptive research. Glass and Hopkins (1984) states that Descriptive research is research that involves gathering data that describe events and then organizes, tabulates, depicts, and describes the data collection. The data of the research is in the form of participants' responses to the questionnaire. The list of the questionnaire items' aspects is presented in the following table.

Table 3. The list of questionnaire item aspects of the research

Item	Statements/ questions
1	The understanding of the detailed information stated in the news item video.
2	The percentage of participants' understanding of the detailed information stated in the news item video.
3	The understanding of the background of the event(s) is stated in the news item video.
4	The percentage of the participants understanding the background of the event(s) stated in the news item video.

5	The understanding of the detailed information from the sources of the event(s) stated in the news item video.
6	The percentage of the participant's understanding of the detailed information from the sources of the event(s) stated in the news item video.
7	The difficulties faced by participants and the causes in understanding the information of the news item video.

The items of the questionnaire represent the aspects or structure of the news item text that helps to check the participants' understanding of the authentic news item video presented to them. Later on, the participant's response to each item of the questionnaire will be presented in a detailed way.

Techniques of collecting data

The research data of this research was collected by using a mixed questionnaire where half of the items are in the form of a closed questionnaire and the other opened questionnaire. The responses from participants were being analyzed to identify the difficulties faced by the students and the causes in understanding the authentic listening materials of the news item.

The participants of the study are the second-semester students of the English Education Department (EED), Universitas Nasional Karangturi Semarang, the academic year of 2020/2021. Six students took part in this research. They have presented authentic listening material, a news item video downloaded from ABC news youtube channel about the lost Indonesian submarine, *KRI Nanggala* in the north sea of Bali island. Later, they were asked to fill out the questionnaire.

Research questions

This research is aimed to answer two research questions :

1. What are the difficulties faced by the students in understanding the authentic news item material?
2. What are the causes of the difficulties faced by the students?

Findings

In this section of the article, the discussion on results or findings of the research is discussed. The findings of the research will be discussed in an orderly way based on the number of items in the questionnaire.

The understanding of the detailed information about the event stated in the news item video

The summary of the participant's responses to the questionnaire item 1 and 2 shows their understanding of the detailed information of the event in the news item video. The result is summarized in the following table.

Table 4. The summary of the participant's responses to the questionnaire item 1 and 2

Item	Statements/ questions	Responses
1	The understanding of the detailed information stated in the news item video.	Five participants (83%) disagree with the statement that states they can understand all of the detailed information stated in the news item video.
		Only one participant (17%) agrees that she can understand all of the detailed information stated in the news item video.
2	The percentage of participants' understanding of the detailed information about the event stated in the news item video.	Participant 1 thinks she understands 90 % of the detailed information about the event in the news item.
		Participant 2 thinks she understands 70 % of the detailed information about the event in the news item.
		Participant 3 thinks she understands only 25 % of the detailed information about the event in the news item.
		Participant 4 thinks she understands only 80 % of the detailed information about the event in the news item.
		Participant 5 thinks she understands only 50 % of the detailed information about the event in the news item.
		Participant 6 thinks he understands only 60 % of the detailed information about the event in the news item.

The questionnaire responses from research participants show that, majorly, 83% of participants do not think they understand all the detailed information of the event stated in the news item video. Moreover, The percentage that they mention to represent the level of their understanding, on average, is only 63 %.

The understanding of the background of the event stated in the news item video

In this section, the discussion will be about participants' responses to the questionnaire item 3 and 4 about their understanding of the background of the event stated in the news item video. The summary is presented in the following table.

Table 5. The summary of the participant's responses to the questionnaire item 3 and 4

Item	Statements/ questions	Responses
3	The understanding of the background of the event is stated in the news item video.	Three participants (50%) disagree with the statement that states they can understand the background of the event stated in the news item video.
		Three participants (50%) agree to the statement that states they can understand the background of the event stated in the news item video.
4	The percentage of participants' understanding of the background of the event is stated in the news item video.	Participant 1 thinks she understands 90 % of the background of the event stated in the news item video.
		Participant 2 thinks she understands 80 % of the background of the event stated in the news item video.
		Participant 3 thinks she understands only 25 % of the background of the event stated in the news item video.
		Participant 4 thinks she understands only 60 % of the background of the event stated in the news item video.
		Participant 5 thinks she understands only 45 % of the background of the event stated in the news item video.
		Participant 6 thinks he understands only 60 % of the background of the event stated in the news item video.

The questionnaire responses from research participants show that, equally, 50 % participants do not think they understand the background of the event stated in the news item video and, on the other hand, the other 50 % participants think in reverse. In addition, The percentage that they mention to represent the level of their understanding of the background of the event stated in the news item video, on average, is 60 %.

The understanding of the detailed information stated by the expert about the event in the news item video.

The discussion in this part will be about participants' responses to the questionnaire items 5 and 6 about their understanding of the detailed information stated from the sources about the event in the news item video. The summary is presented in the following table.

Table 6. The summary of the participant's responses to the questionnaire item 5 and 6

Item	Statements/ questions	Responses
5	The understanding of the detailed information stated by the expert about the event in the news item video.	Three participants (50%) disagree with the statement that states they can understand the detailed information stated from the expert about the event in the news item video.
		Three participants (50%) agree to the statement that states they can understand the detailed information stated from the expert about the event in the news item video.
6	The percentage of participants' understanding of the detailed information stated by the expert about the event in the news item video.	Participant 1 thinks she understands 85 % of the detailed information stated by the expert about the event in the news item video.
		Participant 2 thinks she understands 80 % of the detailed information stated by the expert about the event in the news item video.
		Participant 3 thinks she understands only 25 % of the detailed information stated by the expert about the event in the news item video.
		Participant 4 thinks she understands only 60 % of the detailed information stated by the expert about the event in the news item video.
		Participant 5 thinks she understands only 45 % of the detailed information stated by the expert about the event in the news item video.
		Participant 6 thinks he understands only 40 % of the detailed information stated by the expert about the event in the news item video.

The questionnaire responses from research participants show that, equally, 50 % of participants do not think they understand the detailed information stated from the sources about the event in the news item video. In reverse, the other 50 % of participants think that they understand the detailed information stated from the sources about the event in the news item video. At the individual level, the percentage that they mention to represent the level of their understanding of the detailed information stated from the sources about the event in the news item video, on average, is 56 %.

The causes of participants' difficulties in understanding the information of the news item video.

In the questionnaire item number 7, the participants of the research gave the response about the difficulties which were faced by them during the understanding process toward the information of the news item video. The summary of their response is presented as follows.

Table 7. The summary of the participant's responses to the questionnaire item 7

Number	participant	Responses
1	Participant 1	The intonation and the speech rate of the native speakers make it difficult to understand the information in the video.
2	Participant 2	The difficulties are still related to the speed of the speech of native speakers which is still too fast for EFL students.
3	Participant 3	There are so much unfamiliar vocabulary and the speed of the native speaker's speech is too fast.
4	Participant 4	The speed of the native speaker's speech is considered too fast for me so it is so difficult to understand the information in the video.
5	Participant 5	The lack of listening strategy understanding can cause difficulties to understand the information in the video.
6	Participant 6	The difficulties in understanding the information of the news item video are caused by the lack of English vocabulary.

Based on the summary of the participants' responses toward questionnaire item 7, there is some crucial information uttered by participants about the causes of their difficulties in understanding the information in the authentic news item video. First, the speed of native speakers when they speak in the video is too fast for majorly participants in this research. The native speakers may speak in a natural way but that still does not fit yet to the participants of this research, the EFL students, therefore that influences the clarity of information. The clarity of the message is not good and makes the video difficult for them to understand the news item completely. Second, the vocabulary unfamiliarity and lack of vocabulary mastery are also the reason why the participants face difficulty in understanding the authentic news item. Third, the lack of listening strategies in the EFL context is also mentioned as the reason for the difficulty to understand the information of the authentic news item.

Conclusion and Implication

Based on the research findings in the previous part of this article, there are several conclusions and implications that can be listed.

1. The Majority of the research participants state that they cannot understand the detailed information about the event stated in the authentic news item. Individually, the percentage of their understanding of the detailed information varies from 25%, 50%, 60%, 70%, 80%, and 90%.

2. Half of the research participants state that they cannot understand the background information about the event stated in the authentic news item and the other half state can understand them. At the individual level, the percentage of their understanding of the background information varies from 25%, 45%, 60%, 60%, 80%, and 90%.

3. Half of the research participants state that they cannot understand the background information about the event stated in the authentic news item and the other half state can understand them. At the individual level, the percentage of their understanding of the background information varies from 25%, 45%, 60%, 60%, 80%, and 90%.

4. Half of the research participants state that they cannot understand the detailed information stated from the sources about the event in the news item video and the other half of participants state they can understand. At the individual level, the percentage of their understanding of the background information varies from 25%, 40%, 45%, 60%, 80%, and 85%.

5. The difficulties faced by the research participants are caused by three reasons. They are the speed of the native speakers' talk, the vocabulary unfamiliarity and lack of vocabulary mastery in the authentic news item video, and the lack of listening strategy.

6. The research findings imply that the use of authentic news items as the material in EFL listening class should be done by selecting carefully the material based on them. First, the appropriate speed of the speaker's talk should suit the level of students in the EFL context. The vocabulary familiarity, mastery, and listening strategy owned and mastered by the students in the class should be also taken into account.

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