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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **The Impact of Authentic Material Use on English Language Classes At Nguyen Tat Thanh University**

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**| ABSTRACT**

In recent years, due to the remarkable explosion of the Internet and technology as well as the globalization orientation, language teaching has witnessed many new and innovative teaching methods and materials in ESL classrooms. Many teachers have taken advantage of this trend and made the language classroom more attractive with visual aids and interactive teaching methods using technology. Moreover, besides traditional classroom contexts with textbooks, instructors or teachers, whiteboards, and markers, learners themselves nowadays have better access to many other channels of language learning, such as Youtube, one of the most internationally popular platforms, Netflix, BBC, Ted Talks, the news, radio podcasts, etc. where they can actually learn the language as well as an approach to the content they want at their own homes. In fact, it is undoubtedly true that in recent days, it is very difficult to find a teenager or young adult without a smartphone or Internet access, and young Vietnamese students are not excluded. The sharp increase of high school and university students who own a Youtube or Netflix account and the amount of time they spend watching TV shows, viral video clips, soap operas, or movies every day made the researcher wonder if we could use these endless captivating sources of materials to actually enhance learners' motivation and listening ability in Vietnamese ESL classrooms.

**| KEYWORDS**

Authentic materials, communication skills, ESL, technology

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### **1. Introduction**

Listening has been considered an essential input skill in foreign language teaching and learning for a long period of time. Language students who master listening skills may have a better chance to possess a higher level of language proficiency in the other skills. According to Gilakjani & Ahmadi (2011, p.982), language learners who participate actively in the listening experience are more likely to "construct clear and accurate meaning as they interpret the speaker's verbal message and nonverbal cues". Despite being one of the most important skills, to begin when learning and mastering a language, listening skill has not been paid adequate attention and research, especially in Vietnamese educational contexts, as many Vietnamese high school and university students express their concerns and fears about this particular skill in their English language learning. Meanwhile, the researcher also realizes that students really enjoy watching different kinds of programs, TV shows, films, etc., in their free time, and when bringing one of those materials into the classroom, they tend to be excited and attracted to the materials during their language learning. Moreover, the students seem to be motivated and engaged more in the lesson, especially towards non-educational materials. Considering this, the researcher decides to conduct this project paper in order to determine whether the use of authentic materials in teaching listening has effects on students' motivation and facilitates their listening ability in ESL classes at Nguyen Tat Thanh University.

### **2. Research problems and research questions**

#### **2.1 Research problems**

Mendelsohn (1994) defines listening comprehension as "the ability to understand the spoken language of native speakers". In the

Vietnamese standard educational program, due to budget constraints, students do not have many chances to attend English classes with native English teachers in their secondary school and high school; instead, their learning program is based on a compulsory series of textbooks published by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training, in which the listening sections are limited and not really complex. Later on, when they move to higher education after high school graduation, students have more opportunities to enhance their English listening skill as Vietnamese colleges and universities pick their own English textbooks, which is mainly from foreign publishers such as Cambridge or Oxford. I had taught at Ton Duc Thang University for three years, and the course book they used for English communicative classes was the Life series by National Geographic from A1 level to B1. In each semester, the students would take part in six units, and for each unit, they had several chances to listen to the recordings, which have the contents and semantic items related to the unit topic. For each listening exercise, I tend to divide my teaching process into three steps: pre-listening – introducing vocabulary items and the topic of the listening task so that students may have enough input knowledge of what they are going to listen to, while-listening – normally I divide this step into listening for main ideas and listening for details or listening for checking answers separately, and post-listening, in which students may produce their own understanding and knowledge derived from the listening audio. When teaching elementary and pre-intermediate level students here, I realized that most students find the listening exercises in the textbook easy. They can complete a wide range of different listening tasks, namely gap filling, matching, and multiple-choice easily; of course, some weak students might be struggling at the first attempt, but they are still able to finish these tasks correctly later on and catch up with their classmates. However, when I had chances to take the students down the street or to the parks, where they could talk with many foreigners and practice their speaking skills, they seemed to show their hesitation and lack of understanding when listening to the native English speakers. Of course, they could understand most of the greetings and introduction parts of speech, but when it came to more complex and longer sentences with a higher density of information, they just stared at each other and could not respond. As a result, their communication had some difficulties and could not process as smoothly as expected. There are also some sharing from my students that, when they attended classes in other subjects with foreign teachers, maybe because of the speed of speech, the native intonation, the accent or the academic words, or even their feelings of anxiety, they could not catch up with the lectures. As a matter of fact, it made me wonder that are the listening materials in the classroom lack authentic components, which makes my students have difficulties when listening to English speakers when it comes to situations outside my English classroom or “real” situations. One of the reasons could be used to explain this is the lack of authentic component in the listening materials used in the classroom: “Many listening comprehension exercises used today in the classroom are still based on formal spoken prose, in spite of the fact that, as we have seen, most heard speech is, in fact, spontaneous and colloquial in character” and “listening comprehensive exercises as such are usually based on a text prepared in advance and read aloud by the teacher or on tape, which obviously does not give the kind of practice needed” (Ur, 1984). This issue triggers my mind to find out the importance of material choice in teaching listening and whether I should make changes in my teaching method in order to facilitate my students in their listening comprehension skills.

As Rogers and Medley (1988) concluded, “in order for students to learn to communicate effectively in a foreign language, they must experience the language as it is used for real communication by native speakers.” Thus, materials or authentic materials are the major components to form students’ foundation in receiving and perceiving the target language during their learning. Additionally, Kim (2015) stated that “listening does not represent a simple word-by-word translation, but rather involves a deeper understanding of meaning”. In other words, the course book listening tasks and exercises are not enough for students to help them really engage in the English language and facilitate them to communicate using the language fluently. As I stated above, in order to help learners improve their listening skills, the most efficient way is to make them familiar with the native speech so that they can catch up with the speed, intonation, accent, and other factors of an authentic piece of conversation. Stempleski (1987) stated that authentic video material “intrinsically motivates students, presents real language provides an authentic look at the culture, aids comprehension, and gives students practice in dealing with the medium”. The primary reason for learning a new language is to become closer to its culture and people. Therefore, if teachers want their students to be proficient in listening skills, they should provide their students sufficient opportunities to get used to native speakers’ spoken items and dialogues, especially in natural approaches. In fact, “the need or usefulness of authentic materials has been increasingly recognized especially in non-native countries”, Akbari and Razavi (2015) stated, and Vietnam is definitely one of the non-native countries that need to be focused on using authentic materials in teaching and learning listening skill.

## **2.2 Research questions**

In my research paper, I want to explore the impact of authentic materials on the listening proficiency enhancement of ESL learners, especially Vietnamese students, who have completely different cultural backgrounds and language history from the target language. Following are the research questions I am going to investigate in my paper:

- What difficulties do Vietnamese students have in learning listening?
- What are the attitudes of students towards English authentic materials in language classes?
- What are the benefits of using authentic materials in teaching listening?

- Do authentic materials have an influence on students' learning motivation?
- What are the impacts of authentic materials on the improvement of students' listening ability?
- In what ways Vietnamese teachers should do to ensure the efficiency and quality of language classrooms using authentic materials?

### **2.3 Justification for research aims and expected outcomes**

As stated above, the writer's research project aims to (1) draw attention to the effects of using authentic materials in Vietnamese classrooms on the students' listening ability and language learning motivation improvements; and, therefore, (2) seek ways Vietnamese teachers might follow to better their language teaching via using authentic materials. First of all, the writer recognizes the importance of listening skills in language learner's acquisition, especially those in communicative classes, as in terms of communicative language teaching, it is said that "the basis for communicative competence is listening as it provides the aural input and enables learners to interact in spoken communication and hence language learning largely depends on listening" (Renukadevi, 2014). As a matter of fact, the increasing use of the communicative approach in the EFL situation forces us, teachers, to stress the importance of students' communicative competence (Gilakjani and Ahmadi, 2011). In addition, the topic of listening teaching materials in Vietnam has not been considered seriously and paid enough attention, as there have not been many research projects conducted on this topic. This could be explained by the fact that in many English classrooms in Asia, and Vietnam is not excluded, the emphasis is on the development of reading comprehension, vocabulary, and structural patterns (i.e., grammar) for the purposes of passing the final tests or entrance examinations (Van, 2018). Therefore, the research is expected to provide Vietnamese teachers with ways to facilitate students' listening skills and motivate their learning through material selection, as well as to add variations to teachers' listening teaching methods and strategies. To conclude, in my research paper, I would like to investigate the impact of English authentic materials and resources, including real-life conversations, announcements, advertisements, talk shows, TV programs, the news, movies, presentation, lecture, etc., on both teaching and learning listening skill in Vietnamese classroom. Through this investigation, I also would like to suggest some ways for Vietnamese teachers to enhance their listening teaching by using authentic materials. As Kim (2015) suggested that "teachers should guide students in understanding actual speech so that students learn to deal with genuine conversations and real listening situations" I noticed that this issue is a vital problem in most Vietnamese school and university students, especially when they start working in international companies after graduation, most of them do not meet the recruiters' requirements of English communication skill. Therefore, I would like to find the answers to clarify and highlight the importance of authentic materials and resources in teaching and learning listening in the Vietnamese classroom context as a way that could further benefit both students and teachers.

## **3. Literature Review**

### **3.1 Teaching listening**

Since Rankin (1926/1952) defined listening as the ability to "understand spoken language" (p. 847), listening skill in language learning is regarded as the most significant ability that learners should pay attention to, especially for those who aim to master language communication. To emphasize this point of view, Renukadevi (2014) explains the fact that listening skill plays the most important part in communication because it is "pivotal in providing a substantial and meaningful response" (p.60). In fact, being able to listen to a piece of speech in the target language would be beneficial for the learners when they would have more sources of input information to understand and produce the language themselves. In addition, with better performances in listening skills, students may gain self-confidence and encouragement during their language learning process as those with "well-developed listening comprehension skills" are likely to "participate more effectively in class" (Brown, 2001). Listening teaching strategies are often divided into three stages which are known as pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening activities. The pre-listening stage is where the teacher provides students with an introduction and key vocabulary items of the listening tasks. As a matter of fact, pre-listening is a stage that language teachers usually use to captivate learners' interests in the listening lesson topic and sketch some basic information and concepts for them to be well-prepared for the upcoming listening tasks. The aims of this initial stage of the listening teaching strategy are to encourage students to recall their prior background knowledge of the topic and draw attention to the upcoming information. Moreover, the pre-listening stage supplies students with adequate and necessary input for the listening exercises. The next stage, while listening, continues to facilitate students in their listening comprehension by questions focusing on the main ideas or detailed information of the listening. At this stage, students have the opportunity to check their anticipation earlier and modify them to complete the task requirements depending on what they are listening to. As this is a stage where students have actual access to the listening materials, the teacher makes sure students remember and record key words or main information as they listen for later references. Post-listening stage, on the other hand, expands students' language knowledge and skills from the listening tasks. After listening, post-listening activities push students to connect what they have listened to with their personal experiences and perspectives and think further. Post-listening tasks also assist teachers in their observation and evaluation of the listening lesson teaching and learning efficiency.

There are two kinds of listening teaching strategies involved in the ESL classroom: bottom-up and top-down processing. Whereas the bottom-up teaching strategy focuses on the input information of the learners so that they can get the meaning of the listening

materials, top-down processing requires learners' background knowledge of the listening topic. In bottom-up listening teaching, teachers should prepare learners beforehand as they need a large amount of vocabulary and knowledge of sentence structures in order to understand the tasks (Richards, 2008). In other words, the basic foundation of this particular kind of listening teaching strategy is the learners' language lexical and grammatical competence. Identifying key words and true-false are some kinds of exercises in the listening bottom-up teaching method. Nunan (1995) claims that the bottom-up processing assumes listening as a process of decoding the sounds that one hears in a linear fashion, from the smallest meaningful units (phonemes) to complete texts (p. 52). Top-down teaching, on the other hand, depends heavily on the learners' prior knowledge of the discourse topic, contexts, and the relationships among the utterances structures. Some top-down processing exercises could be listing key points or predicting items. In practical language teaching contexts, bottom-up and top-down are not usually taught independently but "generally occur together" (Richards, 2008).

Although listening, teaching and learning play a vital role in the ESL classroom. Students still express their fears and uncertainty about this skill. During the researcher's teaching experiences, she recognizes that most Vietnamese learners at beginner or pre-intermediate level have trouble with their listening abilities, especially towards target native speakers. One of the reasons for this issue could be explained by both limited listening practice opportunities at high school and exposure to native utterances. Later on, difficulties encountered in the listening experience would lead learners to greater insecurities in other language skills, which is definitely not beneficial for their long-term learning process. In order to seek the possible solutions that can facilitate students in their listening abilities, teachers must acknowledge the source of problems. According to Yagang (1994), these problems have resulted from the four elements: the message, the speaker, the listener, and the physical setting. The problems are also thought to be caused by the speech rate, vocabulary, and pronunciation. In fact, the listening problems are assumed to accompany the delivery speed, new terminology and concept, concentration problem, and the physical environment (Flowerdew & Miller, 1996). In addition, one that makes listening becomes a "difficult" skill for students surprisingly comes from the teacher's instruction. It is assumed that classroom activity instructions provided by teachers do not contain authentic or "natural" and "real" language. According to Herron & Seay, 1991; Secules et al., 1992, we, teachers, tend to slower our delivery speed, whether consciously or not, so as to make our learners easier to understand. This particular way of talking is called "teacher talk" (Robinett, 1978, p. 182). In short, as long as language learners are aware of different factors contributing to their listening proficiency, it is expected that they are more possibly find the solutions for their own improvements.

### ***3.2 What are authentic materials?***

First of all, the definition of "authentic materials" should be clarified before we, teachers and researchers, decide to put them into our language teaching method and classroom. Cambridge Dictionary defines "authentic" as something that is "real, true and genuine" or, more specifically, "language samples that reflect a naturalness of form, and an appropriateness of cultural and situational context that would be found in the language as used by the native speakers" according to Rogers and Medley (1988, p. 468). In other words, the materials which are "authentic" must be created by native speakers for native speakers of the language (Bacon, 1992; Joiner, 1991; Joiner et al., 1989; Rings, 1986; Rogers & Medley, 1988; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992) and these utterances must be produced for non-pedagogical purposes (Baacon & Finnermann, 1990). To be fully defined, authentic materials as spoken or written language data that has been produced in the course of genuine communication and not specifically written for purposes of language teaching (Nunan, 1999). Authentic materials are different from audios and tapes recorded in the textbooks, which, therefore, would also be different in various factors such as speed, word choice, length, sentence structures, intonation, etc. Speed and clarity would be the two prominent distinctions between authentic and non-authentic aural materials. Unlike written discourse, spoken discourse is usually unplanned and often reflects the processes of construction, such as "hesitations, reduced forms, fillers, and repeats" (Richards, 2008, p.3). These factors could be elements accounting for the challenges language learners encounter in real-life listening contexts. As they are not designed for educational aims, authentic materials are usually more difficult to follow and understand, along with external factors like nervousness or the environment could lead learners to confusion and loss.

According to Gebhard (1996), authentic materials that can be used in ESL/EFL classrooms are divided into (1) authentic listening/viewing materials, such as TV commercials, news clips, comedy shows, movies, soap operas, etc.; (2) authentic visual materials, such as slides, photographs, paintings, etc.; (3) authentic printed materials, such as newspaper articles, advertisements, sports reports, brochures, etc.; and (4) realia ("real world" objects), such as coins, folded paper, phones, puppets, etc. As this current research focuses on the impact of authentic materials on learners' listening ability, "authentic materials" in this paper will refer mainly to listening/ viewing materials.

### ***3.3 Using authentic materials in language teaching***

#### ***3.3.1 Impact of authentic materials on learners' motivation***

In order to create an effective learning atmosphere, especially for non-English majored learners in high school and university, teachers have to constantly adopt different methods to engage learners and make them feel motivated in their learning process). Teachers are required to select a wide variety of teaching materials apart from textbooks not only to enhance students' ability and

broaden their knowledge but also to raise their interests in learning. Listening to English songs and seeing films with English text are two simple ways to get involved in the natural speech of language, which can trigger students' enthusiasm and cultivate their listening interests (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011, p. 983). As motivation is considered an essential factor in teaching and learning experiences, the researcher has done some research on the connection between materials and the motivations of language learners. In fact, the teaching materials selected must be inspirational and promote learners' interest. Actually, the use of authentic materials in language teaching has been argued since the 1970s. According to Matthew & Alidmat (2013), language teaching and learning become monotonous when the language teachers rely only on textbooks as the source of language input (p. 88). In their research, they discovered how the audio-visual materials used assisted the teacher in the EFL classroom at the undergraduate level. The results of the study indicated that using visual aids in language teaching is helpful for both the teachers and the students. The authors both stated that it makes the class interesting and effective (p. 89, 90). More specifically, Kim (2015) focuses on one particular type of authentic aural material – videos and claims that videos actually bring learners to “a wide array of real-life language experiences that enriches their learning environment and contextualizes their learning process” (p. 15). Also, in this paper, the author emphasizes the difference between video materials are from textbook-based ones, as putting several interesting videos into the lesson plan can make learning more interesting and catch students' attention. Movies, alternatively, are considered a teaching and learning tool that is an “interesting, attractive, and useful experience” than other traditional listening materials such as audio tapes or printed in textbooks. According to Brown and Eskenzai (2004), learners will not be exposed to the real language as it is used in the real world if they are taught by textbooks only. In this way, they would be more encouraged and eager to find out about the target language, especially when it is keyed to subjects that students are concerned about (Scarcella and Oxford, 1992). For instance, a medical student would find a talk show about hospital volunteering or medication more attractive and engaging than an audio tape about some machinery. Hence, the selection of materials plays a vital part in learning and teaching efficiency. According to Dornyei (2001), aural authentic materials enhance intrinsic, integrative, and instrumental values in boosting learners' motivation as there are more variables in the selections of topics, not to mention endless. Moreover, they are real cultural products from the target community, and they can be easily integrated into learners' daily life (We, Tsai, Wang & Huang, 2011, p.88). Learners' executive motivation could be affected by internal components, which come from inside the learners, and external components, to which the materials and tasks of aural authentic materials contribute. Along with these components, authentic materials also provide students with access to cultural knowledge and facilitate them to use the new language authentically to communicate in meaningful situations (Rivers, 1981; Rogers & Medley, 1988). On the other hand, as teachers use authentic materials and observe the impact on their learners, they may actually figure out ways to engage them more in lesson plans (Oura, 2012, p.66).

Regarding the ESL/ EFL teaching contexts, there have been numerous investigations conducted to prove the positive effects authentic materials have on language learners' motivation. The results of the interviews from research conducted by Ghaderpanahi (2012) on Iranian undergraduates conclude that authentic aural material experience in the classroom made most of the students more comfortable than the time they started the class. However, there are some obstacles that can make authentic materials become a hindrance in ESL classrooms. In Ghaderpanahi's project, the interviews also revealed that there are some students who still have feelings of discomfort toward English outside the classroom. This would make the researcher take students' experiences and reactions during the experiment into account in her project. Furthermore, teachers should be careful when selecting listening or aural materials as it is important to determine whether the materials are relevant and suitable for the learner's personal background and long-term learning objectives. Apart from not understanding the vocabulary involved, they would not be motivated to understand something that they cannot relate to (Ross, 2007, p.32). The challenge for ESL/EFL teachers is to identify authentic materials of potential interest to students and to prepare the students to deal with these texts in a meaningful way (Wing, 1986). Considering the significant importance of materials on learners' motivation, the researcher will focus on the preferences and common issues; Vietnamese students may find interesting or familiar with in order to facilitate the authentic material selection procedures. As a developing country with the majority of the population are young generations, topics related to entertainment, shopping or sports would be captivating for them. Additionally, since more and more Vietnamese students are trying to reach the goal of fluently communicating with native English speakers in both social and academic contexts due to globalization and increasing international job opportunities, listening materials that can assist them in enhancing these goals will be the most captivating materials.

### **3.3.2 Impact of authentic materials on learners' listening competency**

Along with enhancing learners' motivation, the aural authentic materials are expected to facilitate learners in their listening abilities as Finnemann (1990) claimed that when students are properly prepared, authentic materials have a positive effect on both comprehension and motivation. Harmer (1991) states that only authentic materials can actually develop students' listening and reading skills. In the history of ESL teaching research, there have been many researchers who investigated the effects of authentic materials use on ESL as well as EFL classrooms. First of all, besides motivation, a language learner should be exposed to authentic texts in order to be better prepared to deal with authentic language in the real world (Otte, 2006, p.56). In fact, the amount of listening students have in the classroom is not enough for developing their listening and communicative competency as “it is not

always possible by listening only to the class lectures" (Macwan, 2015, p. 95). Results of the study conducted by Herron and Seay (1991) indicate that listening comprehension in language students improves with increased exposure to authentic speech. Kim (2015) concludes in her research that aural authentic materials, i.e., videos, are more useful than traditional lecture-based instruction, and exposure to them actually facilitates the internalization and reproduction of new languages (p. 15). In another research, Otte (2016, cited in Al-Musallam, 2009) explored the impact of aural authentic materials on the listening comprehension abilities of adult ESL students at an American university. Otte concluded that exposure to these texts helps students to improve their listening comprehension abilities and motivation. Likewise, Herron & Seay (1991) conducted an investigation on intermediate students and claimed that students who listened to authentic radio tapes along with textbook ones performed much greater listening comprehension abilities than those for whom the authentic radio program was not a part of the semester's curriculum. The research eventually showed that the more students exposed to authentic speech, the more improved they get in listening comprehension skills. In another study by Ghaderpanahi (2012), the majority of interviewed students agreed that the experimented listening materials (i.e., authentic materials) did benefit them in their self-confidence while listening outside the classroom context. Similarly, the findings of Thanajaro's research in 2000 also proved that the materials did increase learners' comfort level and self-confidence towards the target language, which positively affected their language learning; moreover, they did help learners improve their listening abilities.

From another perspective, a study conducted by Hamouda (2013) on language students in Saudi aimed at exploring the problems learners have in listening skills. The results of the project showed that more than two-thirds of the students surveyed struggled in understanding natural speech, i.e., authentic speech, which is full of hesitations and pauses (p. 136). In fact, when people communicate in real-life conversation, they tend to hesitate and say things ungrammatically and repeatedly as they often think and talk at the same time. These natural factors could be an obstacle for language learners when they are exposed to authentic speech. The findings are similar to previous research by Hasan (2000). In the research, the author claims that hesitations and pauses in natural speech are the two main reasons causing understanding problems for language learners in their listening experience. Also, in this study, the results of 73.3% of surveyed students admitted that they have difficulties understanding different English accents during their listening experience. These aforementioned findings partly encourage the researcher to provide students with adequate exposure to the authentic materials in order to learn to comprehend challenging elements such as a "natural rate of delivery and intonation, false starts, slang, reduced forms, abbreviations, and other characteristics of spoken language" (Ross, 2007, p. 33). The exposure to authentic materials, therefore, would further help students develop their communicative skills (Porter and Roberts 1987; Brown 2001; Mangubhai 2002), as once they can capture the key elements of natural speech, they would be capable of producing similar one. In other words, the use of these materials provides students opportunities to have the skills transferred beyond the classroom (Ross, 2007, p. 33). If language learners want to achieve communicative goals in the 'real-world' context, they must begin to encounter the language of that world in the classroom (Hadley, 1993; Rogers & Medley, 1988). Nevertheless, in the research of Kienbaum, Barrow, Russell, and Welty (1986), there was no significant difference in the results of language learners using authentic materials compared to those using traditional ones. This will be thoroughly considered in the researcher's paper.

#### **4. Methodology**

In this paper's section, the writer aims to analyze the research strategies and methods of some particular prior papers with a related research topic, which is the relationship between aural authentic materials and language learners' motivation and performances. One of the aforementioned researches is project research conducted by Ghaderpanahi (2012) with thirty Iranian ESL female undergraduate students on using authentic aural materials to enhance listening comprehension. The author implemented the project using a quantitative research method to measure the expected differences in the performance of students before and after the use of authentic materials. Interviews, class observation, and diaries are some types of data collection strategies used in this particular research. In order to gather opinions and attitudes of students towards the materials, two interview sessions were conducted on the first and last day of the learning course. In the first interview, the researcher/ teacher also took advantage to learn more about students' background information and English level. Notes were taken by the teacher during each class through class observation, so that teacher could monitor and realize the noticeable features and adjust the teaching if needed. The action research method was also used as the teacher wanted to evaluate the impact of authentic materials used in his own classroom through learners' improvements and attitudes. Thanajaro (2000) did similar research on international students in a high-intermediate academic listening and vocabulary development class at a language center. The research used interviews, videotape, questionnaires, and class observation as means of data collection. Like the previous research, the first interview of this particular project aimed to gain students' background information on their listening competency. Then the author conducted the second interview to assess the perceptions and points of view of learners towards the use of authentic materials in ESL listening classes. In this way, the author/ teacher could actively control and predict the attitudes and reactions of his students before officially implementing the materials in the classroom. Besides the recordings of the interview sessions, one classroom teaching was also filmed for further analysis. The authentic materials that the author used in the experiment were not only aural and visual ones, as the author also did bring several native English speakers to the class so that his learners would have opportunities to actually

practice the natural speech with them. This particular method could be a great way to improve learners' self-confidence and experiences in both listening and speaking skills. In order to interpret the results, the author made the transcripts of the interview and notes from the class session video and students' participation in the classroom. The class observation process occurred throughout the course, from the beginning of the course until the end, in order not to skip any detailed information for analysis and to closely monitor the students' behaviors during the class activities. Omid & Azam (2015), on the other hand, conducted research on fifty-seven female and male English teachers in Iran to investigate their opinions towards the authentic material use in the EFL classroom. The research is quite different as it focused on the teachers' perspectives and suggested ways to enhance the use of these materials in the EFL classroom. In the course, the teachers received a pre-test, treatment, and post-test. Like other research on students, the teachers also had to take a listening comprehension test on the first day of the course to evaluate their English listening level. During the classes, the procedures of each session were filmed, and at the end of the course, they again did a post-test which had the same format as the previous test. Besides tests, the participants were also asked to respond to a questionnaire to share their insights and opinions on the materials.

As McNiff (2017) stated that one distinctive feature of action research is that researchers conduct their works within their context of teaching; after considering numerous related researches in the field, the researcher decided to take on the action research method in order to measure the impact of the experimented materials while being active in her classroom and teaching procedures. The project was conducted in a class of thirty non-English-majored undergraduates at Nguyen Tat Thanh University in HCMC, Vietnam, which was also one of the assigned classes of the researcher this semester. The sampling students were freshmen aged from 18-22, as the researcher expected first-year students would have more open-minded access and be willing to experience new approaches to the lesson that is different from their high school learning. At the beginning of the course, there was a questionnaire for the teacher to note their background information and English listening competency. At the end of the course, after a period of time using authentic materials, another survey and interview were conducted in an effort to assess whether there was a difference between them. The authentic materials used during the treatment were Youtube video clips, extracts from a sitcom, TV show, and a talk. The topic of the listening materials varied depending on the learners' interests and their background information, but the topic went along with the textbook lesson topics. The textbook assigned for the level of this class was Life series – Elementary level by National Geographic from units 1-5. Data collection strategies were questionnaires, interviews, class observation, surveys, and teacher's journals so that the researcher/ teacher could closely capture detailed information about the classroom, such as teaching procedures, students' participation, students' feelings in class, etc., and gather their opinions about the materials used during the course and afterward. More importantly, surveys and interviews were expected to show whether the material used facilitated them in achieving their learning goals and shared with the teacher what they really thought that was not easily observed from the outside. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed for further analysis. Taking learners to 'real world' communicative contexts to provide them opportunities to be exposed to a natural language environment and evaluate their improvements could be a good idea, but difficult to be implemented due to limited class hours at the university and authorization obtaining.

## 5. Results and Discussion

At this stage of the project, the writer aims to present the results of the research through several data collection instruments: observation, journals, surveys, interviews, and questionnaires. Before the materials were used in the course, the researcher made a questionnaire to gather some background information about the students and their English listening learning (appendix 1). The majority of the surveyed students (24 out of 30) had been learning English for a period of 10-15 years, while the other 6 students had experienced the English language learning process for more than 15 years. However, most of the students marked themselves as "elementary" or even "beginner" English learners. This indicates whether the students were not confident about their own language proficiency and needed more practice, or simply they were just being "modest" about themselves. For the next question, about two-thirds of the students picked "Listening" as one of their weaknesses (18 out of 30), followed by "Speaking", which shows that a number of Vietnamese students need help with their listening skills or at least having troubles with it. From the results collected, the writer decided to focus more on the listening and speaking learning progress of the students in the classroom and seek ways to enhance these skills through activities and materials. From the perspective of these students, the three most selected obstacles in learning listening for them were "be not able to follow the speaker's speed", "be not able to understand the native speaker's accent", and "be not able to understand the main idea of the listening". Some of the students have listed other difficulties that prevent them from listening comprehension, which are "lack of concentration", "translation problems," or "being blank-minded" when listening to an English-spoken speech, especially when talking to a native speaker. In order to better their listening skill, the students were aware of the importance of access to native English-spoken speeches, where they can learn and improve their pronunciation, vocabulary range, and idioms or phrases through mimicking and repeating. The students selected a wide variety of methods to improve their listening learning, such as "listening to songs," "listening to reference book audios," or even "talking to a foreigner"; however, most of them did not maintain their learning and regularly practicing, so their listening skill or communicative skills were not improved much. When mentioning the activities, they would like to have inside the classroom, "watching films" and "playing games" were the two most-picked answers among students, but the interviewed students were still

confused about how the video clips benefit their listening skills and what sources of videos they should watch to better their language competency as well as remain their interest.

Besides conducting prior interviews and questionnaires with the sampling students, the researcher also took chances to talk with other teachers, who were colleagues from Nguyen Tat Thanh University and other universities in Ho Chi Minh City, about their opinions and perspective on the listening teaching and listening materials. As the teachers' schedules were all so tight, the researcher could only manage to interview 5 teachers out of the 8 as expected. To be fair, all of the selected colleagues were teachers at non-English-majored classes. The interviews show that all of the university teachers expressed their concern towards students' listening skills and listed the main reason for this problem as "lack of practice" when Vietnamese students do not have much time and many opportunities to access English native speeches on a regular basis to actually "immerse" in the language long enough. The teachers and the researchers agreed that both high school and university English learning programs do not provide Vietnamese students adequate language practice time, which is why many students have to go to other language centers or extra classes, with or without native teachers, after school in order to be qualified. However, as Vietnam is still a developing country, not many students are financially eligible for extra classes at language centers, and the problems are getting worse and worse in remote areas of the countryside. In addition, the Internet access level among people in Vietnam, especially young generations, is considered among the highest in the world. Considering this, the teachers also realized the number of smartphones, the Internet, and social media usage among Vietnamese teenagers and adolescents (i.e., students) is noticeably high, even in educational settings for entertaining purposes. Therefore, the researcher was more eager to implement the material used in the project so that she could find another channel for Vietnamese students to practice their listening skills and have access to native English-spoken speeches more widely with low-budget but appealing content, especially easy to access for students equipped with the Internet. "Learning motivation" is another major problem most teachers interviewed encountered in their language teaching. "Loss of concentration" and "easily bored/ sleepy" were two main factors pulling down the students' English learning motivation in the classroom given by the teachers. In order to solve or ease the situations, most teachers used "educational games" like Pictionary, bingo, slap the board, etc., to attract students' attention as well as create a lively and competitive learning environment. Some teachers chose other teaching strategies like "PowerPoint slides" or "music" to boost their students' energy and participation in the lesson. "Showing videos" was also a popular choice among university teachers to make the students more engaged in the classroom activities; however, authentic or non-educational purposed videos like sitcoms, movies, films, or the news were not widely used in their classroom due to the videos' "pure entertaining contents" and "school's regulations". To be more specific, most of the teachers admitted the effectiveness of using videos in students' motivation enhancement, but not much in teaching listening as videos, especially extracts from films or shows, were "distracting" and "hard to follow" when students do not focus on the language items because of the combination of sounds and movements at the same time. Moreover, two teachers showed their rejection of authentic materials like films or movies in their classroom because they were "inappropriate" in an educational setting, and the teachers were not familiar with those materials themselves. The other teachers stated that the video contents sometimes demotivate or bore the students, which might lead the approach to an opposite effect; however, they were willing to experience the materials in their listening class if the content was "suitable" and "approachable".

During the course, the researcher kept a teacher's journal in order to record the activities and the material used in the lesson, students' reactions, participation, and their listening skill improvement (appendix 4). The journal is an instrument for the researcher to look back and review what she has done so far after each class and make revisions in her activities and teaching for further classes. As time went by, at the end of the course, when the project was over, the researcher was still able to look at the detailed information and recall what was happening in the classroom. According to the teacher's journal, students were most excited and impressed with the "sitcom" materials, where they had to watch an extract from a TV sitcom series and make predictions about the relationship among the members (Unit 1: People – family). The students were "focused" on trying to listen to the actors' lines and asked the teacher to replay the video several times so that they could have more clues. This was also one of the listening materials that students showed their listening enhancement noticeably: after one repeated time, the students came closer to the answers themselves. Moreover, after the listening section, the teacher also asked them to produce a conversation on their own with similar topics and vocabulary items. The students were more confident and spoke to one another in a natural and spontaneous way. The Youtube food vlog video was also another "spotlight" to the students when it captured many different delicious and colorful dishes in Vietnam and other countries as the young generations were excited and amazed to see things they had never experienced, which encouraged them to concentrate and discover more about the video content. The other sessions worked quite well as the students were able to keep their concentration span and interest in the materials as well as show their language improvements during the listening. However, the "motivational talk" video was not their favorite, and some students even marked it as their least favorite one due to the lengthy duration of the video and "boring" content.

After the duration of the 5-week experiment, the writer conducted another interview with the same 10 students in order to ensure the reliability and validity of the research. The students were asked different questions, mainly about their experience with the authentic materials used in the listening sessions of the English course (Appendix 2). Once again, due to time constraints, the



researcher did not have chances to interview each of the 30 students in the class; however, she designed a survey and asked the whole class to complete it at the end of the course (Appendix 3). The survey was intended to gather students' perspectives and opinions on the material used. Although there were some overlapping or repeating questions in the interview and the survey, the researcher wanted to approach a more detailed view and answer through face-to-face interviews as the interviewees could express their ideas using spoken words and body language without limitations, while the survey provided the writer a "wide picture". Most of the students in both interviews and survey admitted they "like" the new listening materials (i.e., authentic materials) as they were "interesting" and "easy to remember". Some students expressed their preferences towards the authentic materials, especially the sitcom and Youtube vlog, as they were "close to real-life", "had something they could relate to," and most importantly, "funny and hilarious". Due to these significant reasons, all of the surveyed students agreed that they would be willing to experience authentic materials in their listening learning, or English learning in general, in the future if possible (30 out of 30). This result has marked a positive and promising sign for the writer to continue to take on other types of authentic materials to facilitate Vietnamese students' learning motivation in her future language classes. On the rating scale from 1 to 5, most of the students surveyed rated their preferences towards the materials as "4" (25 out of 30), and 23 out of 30 students thought the materials were "effective" to their listening competency. Some of the students in the interviews said that they were not "afraid" anymore after watching the videos and fully understanding the contents. The level of their fears lowered when it came to native speeches, and one of the students even stated that he was "more confident and willing to talk to a foreigner". In general, most of the students could recognize the differences between the authentic listening materials and the textbook ones (28 out of 30 students marked "4" and "5" for this statement), and about two-thirds of them preferred the authentic materials to the textbook audios. According to the students interviewed, the authentic listening materials created more opportunities for them and their classmates to feel comfortable and appealed to absorb the language items, as the eagerness to watch an interesting video is much higher than actually getting ready to listen to a textbook "exercise". Some students even searched for the original movie or TV show to watch at home for entertainment, which is an extremely good learning strategy for ESL learners. Nevertheless, teachers who are going to implement this type of material should consider the length and the topic of the materials since some students expressed that the length of some videos was too long and it made them lose their concentration easily to something else. The topic of the materials is also a key component in deciding whether the material is successful or not. The topic of a video must not only be relevant to the topic or language focus of the lesson unit but also match the preferences of the majority of students in the class. Teachers should conduct a short survey to find out about their students' interests before the course to make sure the students will be comfortable and open to the materials. Most importantly, Vietnamese teachers should do some research on the authentic materials themselves to seek for the most suitable and efficient materials to suggest to their students for their self-study in the long term. The instruction and recommendation of the teachers are so vital that each Vietnamese teacher should equip himself with adequate knowledge about the materials before consulting students and implementing the materials in the classroom practice.

## 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper indicates the importance of listening skills teaching material modification, and the need to get young learners exposed to the authentic language materials to trigger the researcher to conduct the current research project. Using authentic materials in teaching listening is a promising and potential topic that should be investigated more in further research in order to find ways to facilitate Vietnamese students' listening skills and language learning motivation. The project showed that the material use during the course triggered students' intrinsic motivation to learn English and could improve their listening ability in the long term. Due to the time constraints of the course, the researcher expects the effectiveness of the materials will be much higher in other settings and studies in the future.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1

Questionnaire – At the beginning of the course

Hi, please take a minute to answer some questions so that the teacher could better create an ideal learning environment for the upcoming course. As our course is intended to facilitate 4 skills in English and communicative purposes, I hope you can spend some time to show your perspective and personal preferences towards those language areas.

1. How long have you been learning English?

- 1-5 years                       6-10 years                       11-15 years                       >15 years

2. How would you rate your own level of English competency?

- Beginner             Elementary             Pre-intermediate             Intermediate     Advanced

3. Out of the 4 skills, which skill(s) are you most confident of?

- Listening                       Reading                       Speaking                       Writing

4. Out of the 4 skills, which skill(s) are you least confident of?

- Listening                       Reading                       Speaking                       Writing

5. What are some difficulties you have in learning listening?

- Lack of vocabulary
- Lack of knowledge in complex sentence structures
- Be not able to follow the speaker's speed
- Be not able to remember detailed information in the listening
- Be not able to grab the main idea of the listening
- Be not able to understand a native speaker's accent
- Be not able to hear the words or phrases pronounced clearly
- Others: .....

6. What do you often do to improve your English language, especially listening skills?

- Listen to textbook audios
- Listen to extra materials/ reference books
- Listen to English songs
- Watch English-spoken movies/ films/ entertainment TV shows (with or without subtitles)
- Watch English-spoken video clips
- Watch English educational video clips
- Listen to radio podcasts/ news
- Learn new words
- Practice with native speakers
- Others: .....

7. What sources of teaching material you have experienced before in the language classes?

- |   |                                     |   |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Textbook       | <input type="checkbox"/> Video clip | <input type="checkbox"/> Poster                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Textbook audio | <input type="checkbox"/> Games      | <input type="checkbox"/> Films/ Movies                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Picture        | <input type="checkbox"/> Flashcard  | <input type="checkbox"/> Power point slide            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Song           | <input type="checkbox"/> Story      | <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper/ Magazine/ Article |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Others: .....  |                                     |   |

8. What are some activities you expect to experience in this class?

- |   |                                       |  |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Play games         | <input type="checkbox"/> Role-play    | <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to English songs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make posters       | <input type="checkbox"/> Group work   | <input type="checkbox"/> Do exercises            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Watch movies       | <input type="checkbox"/> Watch videos | <input type="checkbox"/> Do painting/ drawing    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make presentations | <input type="checkbox"/> Debate       | <input type="checkbox"/> Others: .....           |

Thank you for your participation!

## **Appendix 2**

Interview 1 – to students, before the material use

Hi, I am your teacher, and I am conducting research on the listening materials used in teaching listening for the Master course at Edith Cowan University. At the beginning of this course, I would like to have this small interview to get to know you more before we actually start the class. You will be asked some questions about your own English learning experience and preferences, especially listening skills and the material use in listening classes. I hope that you are willing to respond to the questions as open and honest as possible so that it could help us have an effective language learning and teaching environment.

Q1: Do you have any difficulties learning listening skill?

Q2: What elements should we have to possess good listening skill?

Q3: What do you think you need to improve in order to enhance listening skill?

Q4: What have you done to improve your listening skill outside the classroom?

Q5: What do you think about the materials (textbook, textbook audio, etc.) used before to teach listening in the classroom?

Q6: Have you ever experienced other types of listening materials provided by your teachers in the classroom? How were they?

Q7: Have you ever talked to an English-spoken foreigner? How was it?

Q8: Do you think you are able to understand and communicate well with other people in English?

Q9: What are your favorite ways to learn English? Which do you prefer most?

Thank you for all your responses.

Interview 2 – to students, after the material use

Hello, nice to see you again. Now the course has finished and my research is coming to an end, I would like to know your experience concerning the materials used in the listening sessions. I hope you are willing to answer the questions in your most comfort.

Q1: What do you think about the materials used in listening sessions (i.e., videos, movie extracts, talk shows)?

Q2: Among the aforementioned types of listening materials, which do you enjoy most? Why?

Q3: Among the aforementioned types of listening materials, which do you enjoy least? Why?

Q4: Do you think the listening materials bring positive or negative effects to the classroom and to yourself?

Q5: Do you think your listening skill has been improved?

Q6: How have the listening materials improved your listening skill?

Q7: Do you enjoy these materials during your English learning? How?

Q8: If possible, are you willing to experience these types of materials in the English classroom or listening classroom in the future?

Q9: Is there anything you would like to change about the materials used?

Q10: Is there any suggestion you want to add to the listening materials?

Thanks again for your participation.

### Appendix 3

#### Survey

Dear students, I am doing a research project on the impact of the authentic materials on university students' listening ability and learning motivation for the Master course at Edith Cowan University. Please take a moment to complete this survey regarding your experience with the listening material use during the course. Your responses will be anonymous and will not be revealed to a third party without your consent. For rating questions/ statements, please rate from the lowest (1) to the highest (5).

Questions/ Statements	(1) Totally Disagree	(2) Disagree	(3) Neutral	(4) Agree	(5) Totally Agree
1. I enjoy the listening materials used during the course.					
2. The materials are beneficial to my listening ability.					
3. The materials are appropriate for the classroom.					
4. The materials are appropriate for me and my language learning strategies.					
5. The materials give me more confident in communicating in English.					
6. The materials give me more chance to access to English-spoken contexts.					
7. The materials are different from the listening exercises in my textbook.					
8. I'd prefer the new listening materials to the textbook listening materials.					
9. The materials motivated me in engaging and participating in the lesson.					
10. I am willing to use these materials for my language learning/ listening learning in the future.					

11. How did the materials benefit your listening skill?

.....

12. How did the materials motivate you in learning English?

.....

13. What do you like most about the materials?

.....

14. What don't you like about the materials?

.....

15. Should Vietnamese university students experience these types of materials more often? Why/ Why not?

.....

Thank you for your participation!

**Appendix 4**

Teacher's Journal

Week/ Session	Activities	Students' learning motivation	Students' listening skill
Week 1	<p>Unit 1: People</p> <p>(personal information and family members)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extract from the pilot episode of the American sitcom series "Modern Family": the extract shows different family members are in hilarious situations.</li> <li>The students (Ss) have to predict the relationship among the people shown from the extract.</li> <li>After each group has their prediction, the teacher (T) shows the rest of the clip, where actors introduce their roles in the family and the relationship among them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most of the Ss felt amazed and appealed to the video clip right at the beginning.</li> <li>Some Ss even recognized the series and showed their excitement towards it.</li> <li>The other Ss who hadn't known the series before were captivated and also laughed at some scenes of the sitcom.</li> <li>As the material was a sitcom, Ss laughed quite often and the classroom atmosphere was lively and energetic.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When T asked them to make their predictions while watching the video, they were more focused and tried to understand what the actors said to one another.</li> <li>After the video watching, Ss worked in groups and tried to explain what they understood from what was happening in the sitcom to their teammates.</li> <li>Some Ss repeated the expressions or lines of the actors in a hilarious and spontaneous way.</li> </ul>
Week 2	Unit 2: Colors		

	<p>(Everyday objects)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Pictionary” game – extract from the talk show named “Tonight show with Jimmy Fallon”: the players, who are also well-known celebrities, take turns to pick a random card with a given object name and then try to draw it so that their teammate can guess the name of the object.</li> <li>• T showed Ss the clip and asked them to fill in the handouts some of the words they heard from the video.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Ss were surprised and amazed when realizing the Hollywood celebrities in the gameshow.</li> <li>• Gradually they were captivated by the attractive hosting by Jimmy Fallon and followed the game thoroughly.</li> <li>• During the game shown in the video, the Ss showed their nervousness when waiting to see the answers and the winning team.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The Ss carefully listened to the description of the players in the video and laughed at it.</li> <li>•Some Ss even repeated the players’ words and phrases.</li> </ul>
Week 3	<p>Unit 3: Places (Adjectives about cities and places in the city)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youtube “Expedia Travel guide to Vietnam” video. The video shows different famous places in Vietnam, geographical features, population, cuisine, and so on.</li> <li>• T showed the video and asked Ss to remember some key items of Vietnam being presented and make a presentation afterwards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As most of the Ss like travelling, they focus on the places shown on the screen with excitement.</li> <li>• There were some places the Ss had never been to, so they tried to explore these places through the video.</li> <li>• Ss pointed at different places in the video to their friends and told one another if they had been to these places before or not. The classroom was relaxing and comfortable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As the Ss were asked to remember the key features of each place, they had to listen to the key language items.</li> <li>• The presentation after the video of each group represented their listening abilities.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>T showed some more videos from Expedia in different countries in the world according to Ss' preferences.</li> </ul>		
Week 4	<p>Unit 4: Food (Famous dishes around the world)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youtube Vlog "Best review food ever" video clip. The video was hosted by an American man travelling all around the world. The video used in the lesson shows one of his food tours to Ho Chi Minh City and the street cuisine here.</li> <li>When showing the video, the T asked Ss to note down the words or phrases related to the food each group was given.</li> <li>After the video, the T asked each group to talk about the food using the words they noted down.</li> <li>T also showed Ss other food tour videos from around the world.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ss showed their instant excitement when the video topic was food, one of their biggest interests of all time.</li> <li>Ss were appealed to the food presented with different colors and mouth-watering illustrations in the video.</li> <li>The classroom atmosphere was so lively and a little bit noisy when everyone was talking about the food and laughing together. The T had to keep them silent and concentrate on the main features in the video several times.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At first, the Ss were a little bit behind and not able to follow the video subtitles because of the talking speed of the native host in the video.</li> <li>After that, when watching it for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> time, the Ss felt more relaxed and understood the video content.</li> </ul>
Week 5	<p>Unit 5: Money (Saving and spending)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Motivational video: Start saving money and spending less on dumb things" video by Gary Vaynerchuck on Youtube.</li> <li>T asked guiding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Ss were a little bit excited when they discussed the money issues and started to watch a real video teaching them how to "spend" their own money.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Ss focused on the detailed information given by the man in order to answer the questions.</li> </ul>



	<p>questions and made the Ss discuss beforehand.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• T showed the video and asked them to write down the answers to several questions printed on the handout.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The video was informative and useful; however, it was not suitable for a group of freshmen students who were not good at focusing on listening.</li> <li>•The Ss gradually lost their concentration and expressed their tiredness due to the lengthy duration and monotonous talking style of the man.</li> </ul>	
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