



EFL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS USING AUTHENTIC MATERIALS IN TEACHING LISTENINGⁱ

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Abstract:

Apparently, teachers' perceptions and practices play an important role in language teaching and learning, which has been recognized by Ellis (1999) and Krashen (1981). However, the purpose of the research is to find out if the review literature search has focused on this respect in teaching listening so far, especially in the Vietnamese context. The present study documents teachers' perceptions and practices towards using authentic materials in teaching listening in the foreign language centers in Can Tho City. The researcher used multi-methods of data collection i.e. questionnaire observation and interview, in which 45 teachers got involved. The findings show that most teachers had positive perceptions about using authentic materials in teaching listening in terms of resources for using authentic materials, criteria of using authentic materials, learners' levels and using authentic materials, Stages in the listening lesson of using authentic materials, benefits of using authentic materials, challenges of using authentic materials. The study also finds that factors such as teachers' different teaching contexts, educational backgrounds, teaching experiences, genders, and ages did not affect their perceptions. Significantly, many mismatches were found between teachers' perceptions and practices about teaching listening. The result of the study confirms that teachers' perceptions were partly reflected in their practices. Considering these findings, some implications were made.

Keywords: teaching listening, teachers' perceptions and practice

ⁱ THÁI ĐỘ CỦA GIÁNG VIÊN TIẾNG ANH ĐỐI VỚI VIỆC SỬ DỤNG TÀI LIỆU THỰC TẾ TRONG VIỆC GIÁNG DẠY KỸ NĂNG NGHE

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1. Introduction

The results of the study conducted by Herron and Seay (1991) indicate that authentic speech can improve students' listening comprehension effectively. In other words, students can learn best if the teachers use authentic materials suitable to their levels.

Ur (1998) also suggests that the speech should be an approximation to the real language if it is not entirely authentic. From the above ideas, the researcher hopes that authentic materials can be useful in the EFL teachers' listening and also a comfortable atmosphere to acquire the language easily.

Ellis (1999) and Krashen (1981) viewed that authentic materials had affected second language acquisition, so it is consistent with the principles of communicative language teaching. In other words, teachers can use it to motivate students in the listening classroom.

1.1. Research question

This paper will cover this question:

- What are EFL teachers' perceptions towards using authentic materials in the listening lesson?

2. Literature review

2.1. Definition of perception

The word "perception" has been defined differently. Richard (1983) stated teachers' perception as *"the information, attitudes, values, expectations, theories, and assumptions about teaching and learning that teachers build up over time and bring with them to the classroom"* (p.66).

In this research, the researcher adopts the definition provided by Ladd (2011), *"perception is the term that refers to the human ability to process, interpret and attribute meaning to the information received via the sensory system i.e. seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching"* (p.332). Also, according to the author, the term "perception" is used to refer to a person's perceptual experiences at a higher level of information processing. In other words, one processes, interprets, and reacts to the information which he or she receives, based on his or her sensory stimulation.

2.1.1 The roles of teacher perceptions in the teaching process

Because teachers are a critical factor in the implementation of an appropriate approach, their values, attitudes, and beliefs are important. The following section will present the roles of teacher perceptions in the teaching process.

Perception systems serve as a contextual filter (Rao, 2002) or intuitive screen (Gorsuch, 2001) through which teachers possess information from their experience in the classroom, make sense of it, and modify or adapt subsequent actions.

Second, perception systems organize and guide the decisions and actions of teachers (Nazari, 2007). In teaching English, for instance, there have been a lot of

approaches for teachers to choose from. If the teacher believes much in the grammar-translation approaches, he or she may teach grammar by translating rather than by other approaches.

2.2 Authentic materials

There are different definitions of authentic materials (AMs). What is common in these definitions is *"exposure to real language and its use always exist in our community"*. Rogers and Medley (1988) emphasized the important role of oral authentic materials and written language materials in daily situations by native speakers in many situations. Taylor (1994) defines it as materials that are designed for native speakers. These real materials are designed not for language students, but for the speakers of the language teaching purposes. Based on some social purpose in the language community, Peacock (1996) said that authentic materials have been significant since they increase students to make the learner excited to learn the 'real' language.

Nunan (1999) also claims that authentic materials as spoken or written language data are produced by the course of genuine communication, and it is specifically designed for language teaching. Research by Hutchinson and Taylor (1994) shared with some famous authors such as Mottow (1977, p.13) or Nunan (1989, p.54) suggests that when thinking of the other three types of authenticity proposed, they argue that a text can be truly authentic in the context that it was originally written; or it will no longer be authentic when it is put outside its context to be used in classrooms, or especially in EFL environments.

2.2.1 Sources and types of AMs

In the current century many sources of authentic materials are used but finding appropriate sources is really difficult. Taylor (1994) recommended some sources of authentic materials, for example, a great number of sources- newspapers, magazines, user manuals, leaflets and brochures (government, departments, travel agencies, banks, and other fields), foreign mission information (embassies, non-government, agencies), international, companies, airline, TV programs, videos, lectures and speeches, native or near-native speakers, songs, letters, games.

2.3 Definition of listening

In the clear explanation, listening is considered as the process that stimulates listeners aurally and tries to interpret the speakers 'messages. In previous years, the listening definitions have been claimed by various scholars. The work carried out by Johnson (1951) expanded that the definition of listening is *"related to the ability to understand and respond effectively to oral communication"* (p. 58).

In addition to this, Jones (1956) pointed out that listening is *"a selective process by which sounds communicated by some sources are received, critically interpreted, and acted upon by a purposeful listener"*. Furthermore, Underwood (1989) stated listening is *"considered as the activity of paying attention to and trying to get meaning from something people hear"*

3. Methodology

3.1 Procedure

The present study is descriptive research in which both the quantitative and qualitative methods were used for collecting data. The research consists of two stages.

In the first stage, a questionnaire was constructed based on the theoretical literature review to identify the EFL teachers' perceptions towards using AMs in teaching listening. Specifically, the questionnaire has six clusters within twenty-seven items. It was used to evaluate the satisfaction of EFL teachers of using AMs in listening instruction via a five-point Likert scale. The quantitative analyses were conducted to investigate the participants' perceptions and compare the results with the findings of the stage.

In the second stage, the observation is used to collect qualitative. It is adapted from Do (2010). Specifically, the observation consists of five parts. It was used to measure the EFL teachers' practices of using AMs. Secondly, qualitative analyses were also conducted to investigate the participants' practices of using AMs in teaching EFL listening. The content of the interview and observation were conducted also to help teachers gain insights into a potential measure to develop their progression in teaching English.

In the third stage, the interview questions were also used to collect rich qualitative data from the EFL participants. 10 participants were asked to answer five questions about using of authentic materials in teaching EFL listening of EFL teachers in three foreign language centers. Content analysis of the interview data was conducted to find out the EFL teachers' practices towards using authentic materials in teaching listening.

3.2 Research design

The current study is a descriptive research since research questions pointed to the need to access "*a wealth of detailed information*" (Patton, 2005), and to "*processes and meanings*" that are difficult to measure. In this study, a mixed-method research paradigm that includes both quantitative and qualitative approaches is first used in investigating the overall teachers' perceptions and practices. Then, the qualitative approach is employed to more deeply examine teachers' practices. Also, the qualitative and quantitative approach is implemented in measuring the extent to the teachers' practices towards using authentic materials in teaching EFL listening was employed by the teacher participants in the study.

Besides, a quantitative research is quite indispensable to exploring teachers' perceptions of the satisfaction of employing authentic materials in EFL listening instruction in teaching EFL listening classes. Therefore, to increase the validity of this study, the qualitative instrument is also used to measure EFL teacher's practices AMs in teaching listening classes.

The questionnaire was used as the first data collection method because as Edward *et al.* (1991) mentioned, one of the advantages of using questionnaires was that "*respondents will have time to ponder privately before they reply, especially if questionnaires can be taken away and returned later*".

3.3 Participants

The participants of the study consist of 45 EFL teachers in Cantho City who teach listening and come from three English foreign language centers in Ninh Kieu district, Can Tho City. The participants are 24- over 50 years old. There are 23 males and 22 females and they were chosen to answer the research questionnaires, make the interview, and implement observation randomly based on the principle of purposive sampling and their wealth of teaching experience. The researcher aims to investigate the EFL teachers in some foreign language centers with the expectation that the foreign language center is one of the contexts of tertiary education where teachers' perceptions and practices of using authentic materials in teaching EFL listening have not been tackled to date.

Ten teachers participated in interviews, based on their availability and willingness to participate in the interview. Their distribution across the foreign language centers, age, and experience are concerned. Among them, 4 male teachers and 6 female teachers, one is 47 years old with 22 years of teaching experience and from Cantho University; other teachers are 28 years old, and graduated from Cantho University, another two teachers are 53 years old with 29 years of teaching experience from high schools; another teacher is 32 years old and have 4 years teaching experience in Can Tho EFL center. Another teacher is 30 years old and with 6 years of teaching experience in the EFL Can Tho center; the last three teachers are at the age of 25 to 26 years old, and one of them is teaching at Nguyen Viet Hong High School. And, the two teachers have been teaching in the EFL for about 2 years. Actually, the interviewees are in the 25-53 age range and their median age is 37; the range of their teaching experience is 2-29 years, and the median years of their teaching experience is 8.7.

3.4 Research instruments

To answer the questions in this study, participants' perceptions towards using authentic materials and the practices of using authentic materials in teaching listening were measured. To measure these variables, the three instruments were used:

- 1) questionnaires,
- 2) observation, and
- 3) the interview.

In the following sections, these three instruments will be described in detail.

3.4.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to gather quantitative data in the study to collect data for research question 1. The questionnaire includes 6 clusters. The first cluster is involved with the resources for using AMs in teaching EFL listening, the second cluster is about criteria for using AMs in teaching EFL listening. The third cluster is about the learners' levels and choosing AMs in teaching EFL listening. The fourth cluster mentions the stages in the listening lessons in which teachers use AMs in teaching EFL. The fifth cluster identifies the benefits of using AMs in teaching EFL listening. The sixth cluster mentions about challenges of using AMs in EFL listening instruction. At the beginning of the questionnaire, also intended to investigate teachers' backgrounds and the knowledge of

language teaching experience concerning the general devastating impacts of using authentic materials in teaching listening.

The first cluster (items 1- 4) was built based on Taylor (1994), Hwang (2005), and Berardo (2006). The second cluster (Items 5-8) was based on the theoretical framework of several authors such as Little & Singleton (1991), Nutall (1996), and Berardo (2006). The third cluster (items 9-13) depended on the framework of Kim (2000), Miller (2005), and Guariento & Morley (2001). The fourth cluster (items 14-18) adapted the theoretical literature of Rogers & Medley (1988), Dunkel (1986), Vandergrift (1997), and Underwood (1989). The fifth cluster (items 19-24) is related to the framework of Little & singleton (1991), Peacock (1997), Kim (2000), Gilmore (2007), Guariento & Morley (2000), Hwang (2005), Yeung (2011), Ur (1984), Brown & Yule (1983) and Berardo (2006). The sixth cluster (items 25-27) was laid out in the literature of Morison (1989), Widdowson (2003), Williams (1983), Gilmore (2007), Nutall (1982), Berardo (2006), Ciccone (1995), and Cook (1996). The designed manner of the items in the questionnaire was partly adapted and modified from Nunan's (2004) authentic materials and drawn from various existing inventories (Littlejohn, 1998; Skehan 1998; Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2005).

The questionnaire was designed to investigate the EFL teachers' perceptions of employing authentic materials in teaching EFL listening. This instrument aims to collect data on teachers' perceptions of using AMs in listening instruction.

3.5 Developing research instruments

3.5.1 Piloting the questionnaire

Three weeks before conducting the last official study, a pilot study was implemented to check the content validity of the research instruments in the study. The pilot was carried out at the early stage so that possible problems could be uncovered and modified opportunely. Twelve EFL teachers who shared a similar teaching background with the target participants of the study were required to answer the pilot questionnaires. The results of the pilot questionnaires were analyzed for Cronbach's alpha coefficient to ensure the reliability of the study. With the values of .71 and .73 respectively, it was indicated that the two questionnaires could be used to administer to the participants and collect data in the following phase of the study.

3.5.2 Administering the questionnaires

The proper questionnaire was administered to 45 teacher respondents to receive their answers both online and in hard copies followed by analyzing the data to categorize teachers' perceptions. The process of delivering and collecting the returned and completed questionnaires took more than one week. Forty-five questionnaires delivered were all returned and completed.

3.6 Data analysis

According to Crestwell and England (1994), a qualitative design was selected to be the most appropriate research approach for this study. In addition, it is necessary to gain an in-depth understanding of the LS process, and measure the absolute accuracy of the

frequency of using authentic materials; therefore, the questionnaires are directly used. Data sources used were (a) questionnaires (b) observation (c) interviews.

3.6.1 Questionnaires

The software of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) Version 16.0 for Windows was used to analyze the data collected from the questionnaires all of which were based on a Likert Scale. Initially, the received data were gathered and encoded to input SPSS software. Then, three tests were alternatively run to gain the necessary results. First, the Reliability Coefficient Analysis was conducted to check the reliability of the questionnaires. Second, a Descriptive Statistics Test was run to obtain the overall mean score, the maximum, the minimum, and the standard derivation of entire questionnaires as well as of each cluster. Finally, One Sample Test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean scores of teachers' perception and practice of using AMs in teaching listening were significantly different from a constant, namely a test value.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Participants' perceptions about using AMs in teaching listening in EFL

To measure participants' perceptions about the use of authentic materials in teaching listening, the researcher utilized twenty-seventh-item questionnaires on participants' perceptions about the use of authentic materials in teaching listening, for the teachers. The participants marked their responses to each item on a five-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Data collected from the questionnaires were used to compare their perceptions about the use of authentic materials in teaching listening between and within the 3 teaching levels in terms of beginners, intermediate, and advanced levels.

Data obtained from the questionnaires were subjected to the *Statistics Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS) version 18.0 for data analysis. The five-point scale was coded from 1 as *strongly disagree* to 5 as *strongly agree*. Firstly, the *Descriptive Statistic Frequencies* test was used to measure the subjectivity of the raw data from the questionnaires. Secondly, the scale test was run to check the reliability of the questionnaires. The results show that the reliability coefficients of the questionnaire for teachers are relatively high ($\alpha = 0.89$) (see appendix for the output of this test). Those results support the conclusion that the questionnaires were reliable enough for use.

The *Descriptive Statistic Test* was run to analyze the teachers' perceptions about the use of authentic materials in teaching EFL listening. Next, the *One Sample T-Test* was used to compare the mean scores of teachers' perceptions about the use of authentic materials in teaching EFL listening with a certain value. Finally, *Independent-sample T-Test* was conducted to compare the mean difference between male and female teachers' perceptions about the use of authentic materials in teaching EFL listening.

The results of the *Descriptive Statistic Test* can be observed in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Overall participants' perceptions about the use of authentic materials in teaching EFL listening

EFL teachers' perceptions of using AMs	N	Min.	Max.	Mean (M)	SD
(1) The sources of using AMs	45	2.50	3.75	3.03	.28
(2) Criteria of using AMs	45	3.75	5.00	4.57	.42
(3) Learners' level of using AMs	45	3.80	5.00	4.39	.35
(4) The stages of using AMs	45	3.40	5.00	4.30	.37
(5) Benefits of using AMs	45	4.0	5.00	4.34	.36
(6) Challenges of using AMs	45	4.0	5.00	4.37	.35
Mean Total	45	3.72	4.79	4.12	.27

As shown in Table 4.1, the mean score of teachers' perceptions about the use of authentic materials in teaching listening ($M = 4.12$), that of the resources of using authentic materials ($M=3.03$) is lower than the average point ($M = 4.1$), that of criteria of using AMs ($M = 4.57$) is higher than the average point ($M = 4.12$), that of learners' level of using AMs ($M = 4.39$) is higher than the average point ($M = 4.12$), that of The stages of using AMs ($M = 4.30$) is higher than the average point ($M = 4.12$), that of Benefits of using AMs ($M = 4.34$) is higher than the average point ($M = 4.12$), that of challenges of using AMs ($M = 4.37$) is higher than the average point ($M = 4.12$) in the designed five-point scale of the questionnaire. The standard deviations are 0.28 and 0.42, which means that the difference between participants' responses is not very big.

In short, on the mean score on teachers' perceptions towards criteria of using AMs ($M = 4.57$), the result can be included that the highest percent of participants were satisfied with this aspect towards using AMs in teaching EFL listening. Most of participants had positive perceptions about this. Whereas, on the mean score on teachers' perceptions towards the sources of using AMs in teaching EFL listening ($M=3.03$), the result also expressed that the lowest percent of participants were not satisfied with this aspect towards using AMs in teaching EFL listening. Most of the participants had negative perceptions about it. To sum up, participants had positive perceptions towards using AMs in their EFL listening instruction because the average mean score on participants' perceptions is high ($M = 4.12$)

4.2 Difference between teachers' perceptions about the use of authentic materials in teaching EFL listening and average point

One-sample t-test was conducted on these participants' perceptions of using authentic materials in teaching EFL listening to evaluate whether the mean was significantly different of using AMs in teaching listening in general. The sample mean $M = 4.1$ ($SD = 0.27$) from 4.0 the high mean on teachers of using authentic materials in teaching EFL listening as well as components was significantly different from 4.0 ($t = 4.16$, $df = 44$, $p = 0.00$). The 95% of confidence interval of difference ranged from (3.72-4.0) and the effect size $d = 2.65$, a small effect. The result supports the conclusion that the participants' perceptions were higher than the average point.

Another *Sample T-Test* was conducted on the participants' perceptions about the use of authentic materials in teaching EFL listening to evaluate whether the means were

significantly different from 5.0 the accepted mean for the strongly positive perception about the use of authentic materials in teaching EFL listening. The sample mean $M = 4.1$ ($SD = .027$) was significantly different from 5.0 ($t = -20.5$, $df = 44$, $p = .00$). The 95% of the confidence interval of difference ranged from (3.72-3.0), and the effect size $d = 1.11$, a larger effect. The result supports the conclusion that the participants' perceptions of using AMs were higher than the average point.

Overall, the participants' perceptions of using authentic materials in teaching EFL listening are higher than the average point.

Consequently, participants' perceptions of using AMs in teaching EFL listening need to be described in detail for a deep understanding of each cluster (clusters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) in order to examine whether the participants had a full understanding of using authentic materials or not.

4.3 Difference between participants' perceptions about the use of authentic materials in EFL teaching listening

The *Independent-sample T-test* was conducted on the mean score of male and female participants' satisfaction with the use of authentic materials. The result showed that the mean score of male participants' satisfaction from the female participants' satisfaction with the use of authentic materials was the same. ($t = -2.34$, $df = 42$, $p = 8.2$). The results support the conclusion that the male and female participants believed more about the use of authentic materials in teaching EFL listening. The participants' perceptions of using authentic materials in teaching listening are higher than the average point.

This section has just presented the results of participants' perceptions about the use of authentic materials in teaching EFL listening. In general, all teachers are satisfied with the use of authentic materials in EFL. Therefore, in comparison between the two groups male and female, there is no difference in the way that teachers' perceptions about the use of authentic materials. The following section will report the results of teachers' classroom practices of using authentic materials in teaching EFL listening.

5. Conclusions

In summary, this chapter comes to an end with the report of the current research. The present study was started to examine the teachers' perceptions and their instructional practices in the exploitation of authentic materials in listening teaching. The related literature review shows some evidence supporting the values of AMs in their language teaching, particularly listening teaching. The results from the study help confirm the theoretical background. There was an inconsistency between the teachers' perceptions and their teaching practices in making the use of authentic materials in explaining the listening lessons. Additionally, the results for this gap resulted from their teaching contexts. This implies that although participants had positive perceptions about using authentic materials in teaching English listening, the school facilities prevented them from using authentic materials.

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Conflict of interest statement

The consensus between both authors regarding the publication of this paper was unequivocal, with a notable absence of discord or competition in the finalization of the work. It is imperative to underscore that the authors affirm a complete absence of conflicts of interest in the context of this article. Furthermore, both authors assume full and equal responsibility for the ramifications, both beneficial and deleterious, ensuing from the dissemination of this article. In explicit terms, the authors assert the originality of the content presented in this paper, asserting that it is a product of their independent intellectual endeavours and does not incorporate any materials sourced from copyrighted works. In instances where external materials have been incorporated, due diligence has been observed through clear indentation and/or demarcation with quotation marks, accompanied by meticulous and appropriate acknowledgment through citations at pertinent junctures.

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