

A SURVEY ON THE DESIGNING SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS FOR THE ESL
LISTENING CLASSROOM

by

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Final Year Project Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
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April 2005

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Abstract

A Survey on the Designing Supplementary Materials for the ESL Listening Classroom

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This study was undertaken to investigate the factors that English secondary school teachers consider when designing supplementary materials and to identify the resources obtained in designing supplementary materials for their listening lessons. Survey was the method chosen for this study and Questionnaire and Semi-structured interview to collect data. Thirty English secondary school teachers from Kuching took part in this study. They were required to complete a self-administered questionnaire. Ten respondents were selected for the semi-structured interview.

The findings revealed that teachers designed their supplementary materials for their listening lessons by considering factors such as linguistic characteristics, language, level of students' proficiency, interest and ability in listening, topics and types of activities intended, practicality and the level of difficulties of the task designed through the materials. The findings also revealed the resources used by teachers are newspapers, reference books, workbooks, magazines, cassettes, radio, compact discs, brochures, internet, story books, textbooks and song lyrics.

Abstrak

A Survey on the Designing Supplementary Materials for the ESL Listening Classroom

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Kajian ini bertujuan menyelidik dan mengenalpasti faktor-faktor dan sumber-sumber yang diambil kira oleh guru-guru Bahasa Inggeris di sekolah menengah di Kuching dalam menghasilkan bahan tambahan bantuan mengajar dalam pengajaran kemahiran mendengar. Seramai tiga puluh orang guru Bahasa Inggeris mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini. Mereka dikehendaki melengkapkan satu set borang soal-selidik dan sepuluh orang guru telah dipilih untuk di temuduga.

Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa faktor-faktor yang diambil kira oleh para responden semasa menghasilkan bahan tambahan bantuan mengajar dalam pengajaran kemahiran mendengar adalah "linguistic characteristics, language, level of students' proficiency, interest and ability in listening; topics and types of activities intended, practicality and the level of difficulties of the task designed through the materials". Dapatan kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa sumber-sumber yang digunakan oleh para responden dalam menghasilkan bahan tambahan bantuan dalam pengajaran kemahiran mendengar adalah suratkhobar, buku rujukan, buku kerja, majalah, kaset, radio, cakera padat, risalah, internet, buku cerita, buku teks dan lirik lagu.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to extend my sincere thanks, appreciation and gratitude to my supervisor, Mr. Joseph Ramanair for the guidance and advice in helping me through this project.

To my best friends, Allexander Vincent Unjong and Edmund Robertson Linang, for their unending patience in providing me the guidance, support and advice in helping me through in completing this project and for constantly being with me through thick and thin. It would have been impossible for me to complete this project without their constant assistance.

To my father, Mr. Dunstan Udam, my mother, Mdm Rose Julias, my sisters, Theresa, Magdalene, Caroline, my brother, Simon and also to Jasspero, for their love, understanding, support, sacrifices and patience to see me through my times of need.

Last but not least, to my coursemates who have helped me in one-way or another.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

R Respondent

N Number

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This chapter sets out to review the background of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, purpose of the study and also some technical terms.

1.2 Background of the study

Generally, listening is often “*taken for granted*” as claimed by Anderson and Lynch (1998:3). This claimed was supported by Fauziah (2000) as she stated that listening has a tendency to be “*neglected*” during the teaching-learning process. She further noted that “*...learners are proficient listeners in first language and therefore they would transfer the same ability to second language...*”. In other words, learners are “*thought*” to be transferring their skills of listening when learning language other than their first language. In addition to that, students should be exposed to the language through listening activities to enable them to communicate effectively in other languages, particularly in English language.

The Compendium (1989:14) suggests that materials chosen for classroom listening should be as near as possible to realistic spoken language. Ur (1984:9-10) emphasizes the importance of having listening instruction resemble “*real-life listening*” in which the listener has built a sense of purpose and expectation for listening and in which there is a necessity for a listener response. Rivers (1981:153) pointed that most of the commercialized materials for listening lessons are spoken in an “*artificial manner*” and thus, do not reflect the actual way of speech.

Designing supplementary materials is part of teachers’ task when planning for listening lessons though ample materials are available for teachers to use such as more commercially produced and recommended items to support them in their listening lessons. However, not many teachers are committed to produce their own materials. Richards (1998:131) stated that teachers tend to assume that any item included in a textbook or any commercialized materials must be an important learning item for the students. He further noted that explanations (of grammar rules or idioms) and cultural information provided by the author are true and should not be questioned. Teachers also believe that activities found in a textbook are superior to ones that they could devise themselves.

Selecting and adapting from commercialized products are practiced by most teachers as “*an easy way out*” when planning for listening lessons. These commercialized materials such as textbooks, however “*...cannot cater for the*

diverse needs of all their users...” (Tomlinson, 2001). This statement is in line with McGrath’s (2002:3) view as he claimed that “...*textbooks will need to be changed whenever there are changes in the teaching and learning cycle...*”. In order for the students to cope up with the changes, teachers should play an important role by responding flexibly. Furthermore, Littlejohn (in Hutchinson & Torres, 1994:316) claimed that textbooks “...*reduce the teacher’s role to one of managing or overseeing preplanned events...*”. This is true as teachers will tend to depend too much on the textbooks provided to them and at the same time, refuse to design their own supplementary materials.

Teachers are probably the best designers of material as they know their students well and that will be able to design materials that suit the students’ needs and interests in learning and acquiring new information. Crawford (in Richards & Renandya, 2002:82) claimed that “...*teachers and their experience have a crucial role to play in materials production as well as in their critical classroom use, and the best writers are probably practicing teachers...*”.

Apart from that, when designing supplementary materials for listening lessons, teachers need to refer to resources. The resources, that teachers use and refer to, play an important role in designing supplementary materials for listening lessons. The resources used as stated by Marsh (1996) can be categorized into two headings; resources available in the class or school and also resources available

beyond the school. With these resources, teachers will have ideas on what to teach and prepare students for the next lesson.

Although there are ample of resources that teachers can use to help in making the teaching and learning become more interesting and effective, it is up to the teachers to select and use the resources obtained for the betterment of the students in acquiring new information. In the teaching of listening, resources that involve real-life listening are the most appropriate to use. Students need to be exposed to the “*real-life*” of listening as this will enable them to understand the topic and the purpose of learning.

1.3 Research Questions

To the knowledge of this study, it is found that there are limited investigations into the designing of supplementary materials for listening lessons. As such, the research seeks to investigate further the matter. This study will be guided by the following research questions:

- i) What factors do English secondary school teachers consider when designing supplementary materials for listening lessons?
- ii) Where do English secondary school teachers obtain their resources when designing supplementary materials for their listening lessons?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The significance from this finding will:

- i) hope to document guideline that teachers could use in designing supplementary materials for listening lessons.
- ii) serve as a guide for teachers in obtaining the appropriate resources to be used in the listening lessons.

1.5 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to:

- i) investigate the factors that English secondary school teachers consider when designing supplementary materials for their listening lessons.
- ii) identify the resources obtained in designing supplementary materials for their listening lessons.

1.6 Definition of terms

1.6.1 Materials

According to McGrath (2002:7), materials that include “*realia*” and “*representations*” of an object can be exploited effectively for language learning. He further noted that text materials include those that have been either specifically designed for language learning and teaching (textbooks, worksheets, computer software); authentic materials (off-air recordings, newspaper articles) that have been specially selected and exploited for teaching purposes by the classroom teacher; teacher-written materials; and learner-generated materials.

For the purpose of this study, materials will be referred to as text material that can either be used and designed for specific language learning and as an authentic or real-life material that is able to enhance the interest in learning among the students. This is in line with the definition given by Nesamalar, Saratha & Teh (1995:27) on materials. Nesamalar et al. (ibid:27) refers it as aids or something, which help teachers to carry out and enhance their teaching.

1.6.2 Supplementary materials

According to McGrath (2002:80), supplementary materials refer to materials taken from another source or any other material that is designed for learning

purposes. It also means adding something new in an attempt to provide additional materials in order to supplement the coursebook / textbook. For the purpose of this study, supplementary material is designed when teachers find that there are no suitable or relevant materials that can be found in the published coursebook / textbook. Supplementary materials designed to complement the coursebook used in the classroom to arouse the interest of the students. Supplementary materials designed are in the form of printed material and also audio-visual material.

1.6.3 Textbook

Hornby (2000:1234) refers textbook as a book that gives instruction in a particular subjects and it conforms to what is considered the best or most acceptable way of doing something. According to Richards (1998:131) cited in McGrath (2002:8), most teachers assume that any item included in the textbook must be an important learning items for students and they viewed the textbook as superior to one that they could devise. This is similar to the definition given earlier on textbook. For the purpose of this study, the word “*textbook*” is used interchangeably with “*coursebook*”.

1.6.4 Published Materials

According to Marsh (1996), published materials or in other words trade books refer to books that are intended for sale to the general public. These published

materials are easy to access and there are ample in the market. For the purpose of this study, published materials will be referred to as textbook and / coursebook.

1.6.5 Resources

According to Davies (1975), resources, in their broadest sense, refers to anything that can be found in the school or its environment, that may be used to help teaching or learning. Resources obtained as stated by Marsh (1996) can help teachers to use them to accommodate the diverse range of interest and learning styles of the respective students. For the purpose of this study, the resources obtained for the listening lessons are used to enhance the students' interest in learning a second language.

1.7 Conclusion

To develop an effective listener among the students, it is essential for teachers to design their own supplementary materials for the betterment of their students and their teaching-learning process. Teachers should take the initiative to design their own supplementary materials for listening lessons and thus, they should refer the textbook as an "aid" to vary the activities and tasks to be used in the classroom. Hence, the study will basically touch on the factors that English secondary school teachers would consider when designing their own supplementary materials and

the resources obtained in designing supplementary materials for their listening lessons. Having established the basis for the study, the next chapter proceeds to provide a review of existing literature on the subject.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

This chapter aims to review a number of related studies to support the need of designing supplementary materials for listening lessons.

2.2 Introduction

According to Saricoban (1991), listening is the ability to identify and understand a speaker's accent or pronunciation, the grammatical and vocabulary item used and also in grasping the meaning of what the speaker is saying. Bulletin (1952) as cited in Saricoban (ibid) stated that listening is one of the "*fundamental language skill*" and that it is of vital importance that listening be taught for the students in order for them to listen effectively and critically.

However, listening is often described as the "*neglected*" (Fauziah, 2000) or "*taken for granted*" (Anderson and Lynch, 1998:3) skill as other language skills such as Speaking, Reading and Writing are given more emphasized especially in the ESL

classroom. In the teaching of listening skill, teachers should be able to expose students to the “*real-life situations*” as they need to teach students to listen with a purpose. Besides that, teachers should be able to introduce the students with the processes involved in the listening skills. According to Rost (1994), there are two types of processes involved in listening skill; top-down and bottom-up processing.

To develop an effective listener among the students, it is essential for teachers to design their own supplementary materials. According to Rivers (1981), many current commercial listening materials are spoken at an “...*artificially slow, in prestige dialects that are not typical of ordinary speech...*”. The commercial listening materials are not suitable for learning purposes as they do not prepare the students for real-listening skills.

Krashen (1982) stated that the materials used in the classroom should provide “...*comprehensible input that requires negotiation of meaning...*” to occur during the teaching and learning process. Therefore, commercialized materials are seen as not appropriate to be used in teaching the listening skills in an ESL classroom. Furthermore, it is difficult to find relevant and appropriate materials to fit the students’ learning environment.

In addition, it is essential that teachers design their own materials, here, to design supplementary materials for listening lessons to overcome the difficulties face by the ESL teachers. Teachers are those who know the students better and by

designing their own supplementary materials for listening lessons, it is hoped that the students will benefit from it.

When designing supplementary materials for listening lesson, teachers need to refer to resources. The resources used can be categorized into two headings (Marsh, 1996); “*Resources available in the class or school*” and also “*Resources available beyond the school*”. With these resources, teachers will have ideas on what to teach and prepare students for the next lesson.

There are ample of resources that teachers can use to help in making the teaching and learning process become more interesting. According to Marsh (ibid), the different types of resources can be used to accommodate the diverse range of interest and learning styles among students. It is up to the teachers to select and use the resources obtained for the betterment of the students in acquiring new information. In the teaching of listening, resources that involve real-life listening are the most appropriate to use. Students need to be exposed to the “*real-life*” of listening as this will enable them to understand the topic and the purpose of learning.

Therefore, it is up to the teacher to use and select which resources that may be suited for the students’ interest and need. These resources provide students with additional information needed to meet the needs of a particular group of students.

2.3 The Importance of Listening

Listening is the first prerequisite skill in language learning and learners listen before they are able to speak, read or write a particular language (Bulletin 1952 as cited in Saricoban, 1991). The reason is that a learner has to be familiar with the language before he / she can speak, read or write in the language concerned. Listening to a particular language serves as a platform for any learners in mastering any languages. It is undoubtedly that in acquiring a language, listening is one that is very significant and crucial skill which a learner has to possess in order to successfully learn the language at hand. Rivers & Temperley (1978) believes that listening is “...used nearly twice as much as speaking and four or five times more than reading and writing...”.

According to Rost (1994), listening “...serves as a basis for the development of other language skills...”. In a language classroom this would mean listening skills provide the learners with the grounds to comprehend language learned. Rost (ibid) also pointed that “...listening skill is deemed vital in the language classroom as it provides input for the learners...”. Through listening, the learners will be able to successfully speak, read and write in the language that they are learning in the classroom.

Krashen (1982) in his theory of “comprehensible input” identifies that “...listening is more than what meets the eye...”. The theory believes that as

“*language practitioner*”, one needs to “*realize*” the importance of listening skills. Realizing that listening skills are essential in learning a language as it equips practitioners of language the “*awareness*” that listening has a main role in its contribution in the teaching of language. From here, language practitioners will be able to plan and select what actually constitutes “*real-life listening*” in their presentation of delivering language lesson to their learners in order to achieve positive results in teaching language.

Nesamalar et al. (1995:41) states that “...*before pupils meet language in its written form, they should develop knowledge of words and structures through repeatedly learning this words in the environment...*”. Listening activities are the mode to expose language. Exposing the target language to learners would “...*enable them to communicate effectively...*” as constant listening would help learners to improve their vocabulary and enhance the path of using the target language correctly in the later skills of speaking, reading and writing.

2.4 The Listening Process

Listening is often seen as a passive process (Anderson & Lynch, 1998:6). However this statement is not true as Underwood (1989:2) reveals that listening is actually an active and complex process. Listener needs to undergo various stages of information processing in order for them to derive at the meanings of the intended messages.