

Authentic Listening Materials and Chinese Senior High School English Learners

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ABSTRACT

As a basic and primary language input skill, English listening is often neglected in Chinese EFL secondary school teaching context due to various reasons such as lack of suitable listening materials, teachers' misconception that listening can be naturally acquired as in native language, the limited class teaching time, and ways of teaching, the requirements of entrance examinations for senior high school and colleges, and the acquisition-poor learning environment etc. As an ordinary classroom practitioner in China, although we cannot change the national examination requirements, nor the designated textbooks, we can select some of the teaching materials, reform our ways of teaching, and create a relatively better classroom acquisition environment for our students. This study aims to explore whether the authentic materials can play a role in improving students' English listening or not, since it is usually believed that authentic listening materials can expose Chinese students to authentic English, narrowing the distance between learners and the target language used in real life. The students in Taiyuan Experimental Secondary School are chosen to be the subjects of my study since it is a second-class high school in Taiyuan, and the students' academic performance can represent most of the Chinese learners at their age level.

KEYWORDS: Authentic listening materials; Listening ability; Senior high students

INTRODUCTION

Among the four language skills, foreign language learners always complain that listening is the most difficult skill to acquire. Goh (2000) has conducted the research of investigating learners' listening problems and causes. One major cause for learners' poor listening skill is that listening is often regarded as the 'neglected', 'overlooked', or 'taken for granted skill'. However, it is well known that among the total time an individual is engaged in communication, approximately 9% is devoted to writing, 16% to reading, 30% to speaking, and 45% to listening (Rivers and Temperly, 1978; Oxford, 1993; Celce-Murcia, 1995; Hedge, 2000:228). There's no doubt that listening should be given primary attention in language teaching, esp. foreign language teaching. Harmer (1991) provides a list of possible purposes for classroom listening activities that include both Galvin's general or participatory listening and Underwood's (1989) authentic listening situations (Tricia Hedge: 243). Therefore, various listening purposes are needed to be taken into account when teachers design listening materials, whether it is visual, or non-visual; whether there is one speaker or several; whether its goal is following the gist or extracting important details. Professor Wang (2006: 155), also suggests teaching listening should focus on the process of listening rather than the result of listening, that is, listening materials selected by the teachers should not test learners' memory solely. Choosing proper listening materials has become many teachers' primary consideration in listening teaching, and there is an inexhaustible supply of authentic listening materials.

AUTHENTIC LISTENING MATERIALS

DEFINITION OF AUTHENTIC MATERIALS

Though the notion of authentic materials is much discussed, no consensus of the definition has been reached so far. Various scholars defined authentic language in different ways, 'real language not intended for non-native learners' (Porter & Roberts 1979), 'produced by native speakers for native speakers' (Lachlan, 1985), 'designed for native audience' (Swaffer, 1989, cZhang& Luan, 2002), 'produced to fulfill some social purpose in the language community' (Peacock, 1997), 'language from genuine communication' and not designed for teaching language structures (Nunan,1999), 'real language not written for language teaching purpose'(Kilickaya,2004), 'real language produced by a real speaker for a real audience, designed to convey real message'(Morrow 1977, Gilmore 2007) etc. Ji & Zhang (2010) found that Morrow's definition is more convincing.

The definition of authentic listening materials used in this paper is adopted from Morrow: materials are unscripted, natural and spontaneous spoken language materials, not specially intended for pedagogical purpose, such as interviews, lectures, dialogues, discussions and conversations, etc.(Wu, 2003; Ji & Zhang, 2010)

Thanajaro (2000), points out that the degrees of authenticity in listening materials are various, and some materials possess more characteristics of natural speech than others. For example, the purely authentic materials contain any speaking that is spontaneously and purposely produced by a native speaker. However, there are some materials that have some features of authenticity but they have been reproduced for the purpose of language teaching or learning. These materials may fall into the category of simulated authentic discourse.

A large amount of materials fall into the category of authentic listening material, and would be used in a foreign language teaching classroom. Gebhard (1996) mentions that authentic listening & viewing materials include TV commercials, quiz shows, cartoons, news clips, comedy shows, movies, soap stories, professionally audio taped short stories and novels, radio ads, songs, documentaries, and sales pitch.

FEATURES OF AUTHENTIC LISTENING MATERIALS

Formal authentic listening material, that is 'prepared listening materials', such as news report, political speech and literature lecture, share much similarities with written language, which are well-knit, with large density of information, as well as clear sentence structures. However, informal authentic listening materials, such as daily conversation, shopping, quiz shows, etc., fall into the category of spontaneous materials. They are different from materials recorded from written texts, and they contain much colloquial speech (Lu, 2000). According to the literature available, these different features can summarize into five main aspects which are features of redundancy, phonologic, grammar, style and environment.

REDUNDANT FEATURES

In the ordinary conversation or authentic listening situations, speakers often violate one of cooperative principles, maxim of quantity; therefore, they usually say a great deal more than would appear to be necessary in order to convey his message in real conversation.

Ur (1984), cited in Wu (2003), clearly describes the features of redundancy as redundant utterances which take the form of repetitions, false starts, re-phrasings, self-corrections, elaborations, tautologies and hesitations.

Richards (1983) also states that in natural conversation, about 30% to 50% of the speaking time is spent on pauses and hesitations, indicating some selection and planning process speakers take the advantage of. Pauses or hesitations which occur in speech give listeners time to think.

The following extract from the utterance of an athlete may show many characteristics of redundancy:

But, uh-- I also -- to go with this of course if you're playing well... erm... if you're playing well then you get uptight about your game. You get keyed up and it's easy to concentrate. You know you're playing well and you know... in with a chance then it's easier, much easier to -- to you know get in there and -- and start to... you don't have to think about it. I mean it's gotta be automatic. (Brown, 1994: 239)

The following forms of redundancy occur in the above extract:

- i) Tautology: you know, I mean
- ii) Hesitation (filled pause and empty pause): uh, erm, ...
- iii) False start: I also -- to go with, and start to... you don't have
- iv) Repetition: if you're playing well, to, and

PHONOLOGICAL FEATURES

According to Field (1997), sounds are differently pronounced in the dictionary or in isolation from those in continuous speech. It is difficult for foreign language learners to keep up with the speakers in authentic listening materials. There are many phonological features in authentic listening materials, among which simplification of sounds, rhythms, and intonation are mainly discussed here.

First, assimilation and elision are two most important measures to simplify the sounds in natural speech (continuous speech).

Since in continuous speech, there is not always enough time for the tongue to assume the ideal position required to articulate a sound. Consequently, patterns of assimilations occur, 'leading to the disappearance of word boundaries, to the omission of certain vowels and consonants, and to substitutions occurring for elements within words' (Richards, 1983). Field (1997) gives a very clear line of this in the following figure.

/t/ often becomes [p] or a glottal stop before /p, b, m/	that boy → thap boy
or [k] or a glottal stop before /k, g/	that girl → thak girl
/d/ often becomes [b] or a glottal stop before /p, b, m/	good play → goob play
or [g] or a glottal stop before /k, g/	good cause → goog cause
/n/ often becomes [m] before /p, b, m/	ten people → tem people
or [ŋ] before /k, g/	ten cars → teng cars
/s/ often becomes [ʃ] or is omitted before /ʃ/	this shirt → thi shirt
/z/ often becomes [ʒ] or is omitted before /ʃ/	those shoes → tho shoes

Brown (1990) points out that elision, that is the omission of consonant or vowel, or both, is frequent in colloquial speech. For example,

Phrases	Form of elision	The omission of
Last year	Las year	't'
Nothing stands still	Nothing stan still	'd' & 's'
Give him	Give im	'h'
More and more	More more	'and'
politely	poliely	't'

Second, the rhythmic pattern of spoken English is another of its distinctive features. The rhythm of English is based on the contrast of stressed and unstressed syllables. The rhythm beat in English is stressed syllable. According to Richards (1983), the rhythm and stress affect the duration of sounds. For example,

'The CAT is INTerested in protecting its KITTens.'
 'LARGE CARS WASTE GAS.'

(Rechards, 1983)

Although the syllables contained in each sentence is very different, it takes nearly the same time to deliver these two sentences.

Third, in authentic listening materials, various intonations is another significant feature. Ur (1984), believes that different intonations in the real extempore speech may influence the meaning of an utterance: an important word is often stressed, and such things as certainty, doubt, irony, inquiry, seriousness, humor are implied by characteristic intonation patterns as much as choice of words. For instance,

‘What did you put in my drink, Jane?’

(Fromkin & Rodman, 1988, cited in Mo & Chen, 2000)

If the speaker delivered this question in a falling tone, it means that the speaker asked Jane what she (Jane) put in his (speaker’s) drink. On the opposite, if the speaker delivered this question in a rising tone at ‘Jane’, it means that the speaker asked whether ‘Jane’ has put something in his (speaker’s) drink or not.

GRAMMATICAL FEATURES

In authentic listening materials, many colloquial features of daily language can be found. Firstly, ungrammatical forms and constructors are frequent, as speakers have to devote most of their time to planning and organizing the content of their speeches in ongoing time, regardless of grammaticality. For example, ‘depends upon what time of the day’, ‘it was, erm, was blizzard on and snowing or, pouring with rain...’ (In the extract below) are ungrammatical forms.

Secondly, authentic materials tend to use coordinate conjunctions, because unit of conversational discourse is not the complete sentence but the clause. (Richards, 1983) For instance, the frequent use of the conjunction ‘and’ is illustrated in the extract below.

Thirdly, the vocabulary of authentic listening materials is usually less specific. They are tending to use general nouns such as thing, person and animals, as well as the verbs such as do, make, have, get, etc. (Lu 2000; Wu, 2003, Ji & Zhang, 2010)

Fourthly, interactive expressions like well, oh, uhuh features are used in authentic listening materials. Murphy & Cundlin (1979), cited in Richards (1983), mentions that ‘ both listener and speaker send a variety of verbal and non-verbal signals back and forth indicating attention, interest, understanding, or lack of it’.

Lastly, the function of some cohesive devices is different in authentic listening materials from inauthentic ones. Just as Richards (1983) puts it, ‘the references of cohesive markers such as this, these, and you sometimes not readily identifiable in speech.’ For example,

Well *you* know, there was *this* guy, and here *we* were talking about, you know, girls, and all *that* sort of thing...and *here’s* what he says...

Comparing the following two extracts, it is not difficult to see some differences in grammar between authentic listening materials and inauthentic ones. The former one is from authentic taxi-driver interview, and the latter is the revised edition of the former.

Extract 1:

“Well er, depends upon what time of the day, if, if somebody was to jump into my taxi and it was eight o’clock in the evening and I was just going home and they said ‘Take me to Southampton or Boumemouth’ and it was, erm, was a blizzard on and snowing or, t, pouring with rain or heavy fog I would think twice about going.” (Lu, 2000)

Extract 2:

It depends upon what time of the day. For example, it was eight o’clock in a evening, when I was just going home, or it was pouring or in a blizzard or heavy fog. If a man was to jump into my taxi and asked me to take him to Southampton or Boumemouth, I would think twice about going.

STYLISTIC FEATURES

Compared with inauthentic listening materials, authentic ones encompass features of real and extempore spoken language, which have strong and various accents (Jin, 2009). The idioms and slangs in the following speech, spoken by the landlord of a Cambridge pub in England, who has a southern English accent, illustrates this characteristic of accents clearly.

“The man you have to watch is the one who becomes quietly belligerent, and you sort of take him gently by the elbow to lead him to the door and the next thing you know is thumo- you’ve been you’ve been landed one, and of course without warning you have to collect your sense pretty quickly before he lands you another one!” (Harmer & Elsworth, 1989, cited in Ji & Zhang, 2010)

Looking at the italic parts we can see the informal form (*you sort of take*) and some idioms or slang in the speech of pub landlord which is consistent with his identity: to land one in “*you’ve been landed one*” and “*he lands you another one*” is a slang meaning *to hit somebody*.

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

By contrast, authentic listening materials have background noises. Ur(1984, Ji & Zhang2010), argues that ‘noise’ is the opposite of redundancy, and occurs when the listener can not grasp the information caused by interference. Ur (1984) also indicates that besides outside disturbance, a temporary lack of attention, or confusion about the meaning of a word or phrase because of mispronunciation, or misusing, or beyond listeners’ vocabulary can lead to ‘noise’.

On the other hand, ‘noise’ may be caused as speakers don’t completely obey ‘turn-taking’ order. (Jin, 2009) Synchronous discourse occurs when speakers strive to qualify for expressing their thoughts. It is also an obstacle for listeners to identify the real meaning, although synchronous discourse is a reflection of positive interaction between speakers and listeners. The synchronous discourse feature is demonstrated in the following example from *Listen To This II*:

Curtis: The time we were driving home from college for a spring break, remember? (Oooh.) (Ooh. Yeah. Oooh.) It was a holiday, and every gas station was closed. And that dam gas gauge was on empty.

Martin: And (we were desperate.) we stopped at the gas station (And the neighbors. . .) and tried to get some gas out of that pump.

Grace: And the neighbors saw us and called the police. We almost got arrested. (Oooh. That . . .) Gosh, I was scared stiff.

(*Listen To This II*, pp139-141)

ADVANTAGES OF AUTHENTIC LISTENING MATERIALS

There is a general consensus in language teaching that the use of authentic listening materials in the classroom is beneficial to the learning process’ (Guariento & Morley, 2001).Based on the available literature, seven aspects of advantages of applying authentic listening materials to listening training.

- i. Authentic listening materials expose learners to real language, which include these features of hesitation, false starts, real rhythm, fillers and pause, as well as prepare them for real listening situations. (Field, 1998; Oura, 2001)
- ii. Authentic listening materials do good to develop learners’ ‘inter-cultural competence’ by exposing them to unfamiliar cultural community (Killickaya, 2004; Gilmore, 2007). Authentic listening materials ‘have positive effects on learners’ motivation’ (Peacock, 1997; Guariento & Morley, 2001; Killickaya, 2004).

The study, conducted by Rebuck (2008), shows materials slightly beyond the learners' current level have the tendency to motivate rather than demoralize. What's more, learners are satisfied that they are treated as adult learners, and participate in real world events through the exposure to authentic listening materials (Guariento & Morley, 2001).

iii. Authentic listening materials can be selected to meet learners' special need (Killickaya, 2004; Gilmore, 2007). Lots of researches show that the increasing number of learners wants to use English to communicate with the native speakers around the world.

iv. Authentic listening materials can 'enlivening' English listening class (Kelly, Kelly, Offer and Vorland, 2002; Killickaya, 2004) as they are definitely full of 'stimulating, enthralling and informative' contents. (Krashen, 1989, cited in Hwang, 2005).

v. Appropriate authentic listening materials may increase learners' level of on-task behavior, concentration and involvement in the target activity (Peacock, 1996), as well as foster their true communicative competence (Nunan, 1999).

vi. The exposure to authentic materials is extremely beneficial for breaking learners' habit of transferring first language rules to second language and avoiding fossilizing their language in the form of 'phrase book English' (Hwang, 2005).

INPUT HYPOTHESIS

Krashen's (1985) input hypotheses assumes that the language is acquired in only one way — by understanding messages or by receiving comprehensible input. Krashen conceptualized comprehensible input as 'i+1', where i represents 'learners current level', i+1 the next level. He indicated that by providing comprehensible input which is slightly above learners' current level, the learners' LAD (language acquisition device) will be activated and acquisition will occur. L2 acquisition fails to occur when the learners are deprived of meaningful language by classroom activities that focus on the form of language rather on meaning, or by a psychological block that prevents utilizing input fully.

Firstly, meaningful input contributes to engross learners in working with language at a level which is a bit beyond their current competence. 'Meaningful' has been interpreted variously by materialists and teachers as relevant and topical to learners and their interests' or 'realistic' in terms of stimulating the authentic texts. For listening improvement, it implies a need for varied listening materials, such as real conversations, news report, English songs, etc.

Secondly, Krashen (1989) claims that vocabulary acquisition in the L1 is helped by listening to stories. He points out that more comprehensible input, the greater the L2 proficiency. By providing input through out-of-class resources increase input opportunities.

Lastly, Krashen (1989) also states that the acquisition with higher motivation and self-confidence is affected by 'their particular interests, learning involvement, learning efforts and learning context. Authentic listening materials, slightly beyond listeners' linguistic competence and catering to their interests, do good to involve them in the listening activities.

RESEARCH DESIGN

RESEARCH PURPOSE

The present study is designed to investigate the participants' English learning background, their awareness of true listening ability as well as their attitudes towards the authentic and inauthentic listening materials in listening training.

SUBJECTS

With the method of random sampling of their English results in mid-term exam (2017), 50 students chosen from grade 2, senior high of Taiyuan Experimental Middle School, are expected to do all the items of the questionnaire (see **Appendix**).

METHODS

The questionnaire contains 13 multiple choice items, 4 semi-open questions and one open question. To get more effective responses, the questionnaire prepared for participants is in Chinese.

DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS

DATA COLLECTION

33 pieces of questionnaire are collected during the period of time from April 25th to 27th from the 50 randomly selected senior high students of Taiyuan Experimental Middle School.

DATA ANALYSIS

Section a: About English Learning Background

1. Which junior middle school were you graduated from?

Responses	Number of students
Experimental Middle School	7
Affiliated Middle School of Taiyuan Normal University	2
Middle School No.36	3
Middle School No.37	2
Middle School No.12	1
Middle School No.29	1
Middle School No.38	3
Middle School No.39	2
Middle School No.52	1
Middle School No.53	1
Chengcheng Middle School	1
Second Foreign Language School	1
Foreign Language Experimental Middle School of Science and technology	1
Affiliated Middle School of Taiyuan University	1
Haoli Middle School	1
Sanli Middle School	1
Huangling Middle School	1
Wanbailin Middle School No.11	1
Xinhualing Middle School	1
Total	32

Table1: about the education background

(Note: A respondent doesn't finish this item, so the total number is 32. All the above-mentioned junior high schools are located in Taiyuan)

Table 1 shows that among the 32 respondents, on average, only 2 of them graduated from the same middle school. Thus, they are from different junior high schools. About 47% of the respondents graduated from the key middle schools in Taiyuan, such as Experimental Middle School, Affiliated Middle School of Taiyuan Normal University,

Middle School No.36 and No.37. This may indicate that their English Listening teaching may be different in the ways of teaching and materials used, therefore they are more representative.

I have learned English for	
Responses	Number of students
4 years	2
5 years	1
6 years	1
7 years	1
8 years	7
9 years	8
10 years	5
11 years	2
12 Years	3
Many years	3
Total	33

Table2: about English learning

Table 2 shows that nearly half of the respondents have learned English for eight or nine years, and three respondents have even learned English for 12 years. Most of them began to study English at 5-12 years old (the critical period), as their average age is 17 years old. From this table, we can find that about 89% (as 'many years' is too vague, this item is excluded) of the respondents started to learn English more or less in the critical period.

I learned English in order to		
Responses	Number of students	Percentage
pass GCSE and NMET	23	73%
go abroad	3	9%
communicate with native speakers	5	15%
use it as a tool for reading books in English	16	48%

Table 3: about purpose of learning English

(Note: Among 33 respondents, there is a boy who says he studies English to woo somebody of the opposite sex. Multiple responses are allowed as students may have more than one purpose of learning English. So here 'total' is omitted. GCSE stands for General Certification of Secondary Education and NMET for National Matriculation English Test in China.)

As shown in table 3, about 73% of the respondents (23) report that they learn English in order to pass GCSE and NMET, over 48% of the respondents (16) say that they learn English to use it as a tool for reading books in English, and 15% of the respondents (5) say that they learn English in order to communicate with native speakers. Only 9% of the respondents (3) say that their purpose for English learning is going abroad. The data of this table may indicate most of the respondents share a common purpose to pass GCSE and NMET, which also reflects the effect of China's exam-oriented foreign language education. It may also lead to less English listening training in their daily study life. Additionally, studying English to woo somebody of the opposite sex is out of this questionnaire design, which may reflect a new tendency among senior highs. It also indicates lots of attention should be paid to the psychology of the adolescents.

4. My main problem in learning English is listening.

Responses	Completely agree	Agree	Quite agree	Disagree	Total
Number of students	1	7	18	7	33

Table 4: about learning problems in English

Table 4 shows that only seven respondents state listening is not their main problem in learning English, while others all say listening is their main problem in studying English to various degrees. That is to say, about 80% of the respondents' main problem in learning English is listening.

Section b: about English Listening Background

5. Listening is more difficult than the other three English learning skills (reading, writing and speaking)

Responses	Completely agree	Agree	Quite agree	Disagree	Total
Number of students	2	2	14	15	33

Table 5: about difficult level of listening

Table 5 shows that to the statement that listening is more difficult than the other three skills, 15 respondents say 'disagree', and 14 ones say 'quite agree' (the lowest level of agreement). That is to say, about 45% of the respondents don't think listening is the most difficult skill among the four English learning skills, which may not match with the data of table 4. This data indicate that learners regard listening as the weakest skill in English learning, but they don't think listening is the most difficult skill to acquire. The problem actually is caused by other factors which will be explained in the following data analysis.

6. Have you ever had English listening training?

Responses	Always	Often	Quite often	Seldom	Never	Total
Number of students	1	1	13	12	6	33

Table 6: about English listening training

Table 6 shows that only one respondent often has English listening training, and one choose 'often'. As shown in table 6, an absolute majority of the respondents respond 'quite often' or 'seldom'. Six respondents even never have listening training. This may be the reason why listening is the weakest skill in English learning and also indicate that English listening has not been given much attention in middle schools.

Listening materials used in class mainly are	
Response	Number of students
Textbook tape-recording	31
Audio-visual materials & authentic film	19
English songs	16
Authentic conversation & lectures delivered by native speakers	6
English business negotiations	1
Read by teachers	20
Listening exercise in exam	28

Table 7: about listening materials

Table 7 shows that only one respondent choose 'English business negotiation' and six choose 'authentic conversations' and lectures delivered by native speakers'. On the contrary, among 33 respondents, 31 ones choose 'textbook tape record', and 28 choose 'record of listening exercise'. The data shows that materials used in English listening class are mainly textbook materials, which are not authentic materials. What's more, more than half of the

respondents say that audio-visual materials and songs are used in listening course, while only 7 altogether say that authentic conversation & lectures delivered by native speakers and English business negotiation are used as listening materials. It indicates that entertainment and interests are taken into consideration when they select listening materials.

8. How does your teacher teach English listening?

Responses	Number of students
Playing recording and checking answers	19
PWP model	14
Teaching listening strategies	8
Supplementing teaching materials with authentic listening materials	6

Table 8: about English listening teaching methods (Note: PWP model stands for pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening.)

Table 8 shows that more than half of respondents say their teachers just play recording and then check answer in listening class. Table 8 also shows that most teachers apply PWP model to their listening teaching. Only 8 respondents say that their teachers teach them listening strategies while listening, which indicates that less awareness of the importance of strategy training in class. What's more, among 33 respondents, only 6 state that their teachers apply authentic listening materials to aid English listening teaching. This indicates that authentic listening materials is not given due attention.

Section c: About True Listening Ability

9. The true listening ability is not to understand or identify every word the speaker says, but to understand the real meaning of what the speaker says through context.

Responses	Completely agree	Agree	Quite agree	Disagree	Total
Number of students	11	16	5	1	33

Table 9: about true listening ability

Table 9 shows that only one respondent of the 33 disagree with the statement about true listening ability, while others give the positive responses ('agree') to various degrees. What's more, an absolute majority of the 33 respondents respond 'agree' or 'completely agree'. This indicates that most of respondents share a correct awareness of true listening ability.

I will have a good English listening ability if I can	
Respondents	Numbers of students
Get nearly full marks exams	4
Understand English films and BBC or VOA news	17
Communicate in English with native speakers	15
Understand every word in the tape played by the teacher	1

Table 10: assessment of listening ability (Note: A respondent doesn't finish this item, so the total number is 32.)

Table 10 shows that only one respondent thinks that he will have a good English listening ability if he can understand every word in the tape played by the teacher, and 4 think so if they can get full marks in exams. This indicates that most of respondents can assess their listening ability rationally, that is, they don't assess their listening ability only according to the result of exams, or word-to-word understanding.

On the contrary, an absolute majority of 33 respondents think they will have a good English listening ability, if they can communicate with native speakers or understand English films and slandered BBC & VOA news. The data indicates the increasing number of learners want to use English to communicate with the native speakers around the world.

Section D: About learners' attitudes towards authentic & inauthentic listening materials

11. The textbook is full of artificial elements, very different from the English language in real world.

Responses	Completely agree	Agree	Quite agree	Disagree	Total
Number of students	2	11	15	5	33

Table 11: about the listening textbooks

As shown in table 11, about 39% of the respondents (13) agree or completely agree that the listening materials in the textbook are artificial, different from the language in real world, about 45% of the respondents (15) choose 'quite agree'. Only about 15% of the respondents (5) give negative responses ('disagree'). The data indicates most of respondents see the difference between textbook language and the English used in the real world to various degrees.

12. The existing listening materials (textbook) cannot help listeners improve their real communicative competence.

Responses	Completely agree	Agree	Quite agree	Disagree	Total
Number of students	3	10	10	10	33

Table 12: about existing listening materials

Table 12 shows that about one-third of the respondents disagree that the existing listening materials cannot help listeners improve their real communicative competence. It indicates that some respondents share positive attitudes to the existing listening materials, or are not very clear about them. On the other hand, more than half respondents show negative attitudes towards the use of inauthentic listening materials (existing listening materials)

13. Authentic listening materials can help students improve listening comprehension competency and true listening ability.

Responses	Completely agree	Agree	Quite agree	Disagree	Total
Number of students	7	17	8	1	33

Table 13: about authentic listening materials

Tables 13 shows that only one respondent disagree that authentic listening materials can help students foster their listening comprehension competency and true listening ability, while more than half of the respondents (24) agree or completely agree to the advantages of authentic materials. The data indicate that nearly all of the respondents take positive attitudes towards the authentic listening materials. Compared with table 12, the data also indicate that the respondents have clearer awareness that the authentic listening materials are better than of the inauthentic ones.

14. Are you interested in authentic or inauthentic listening materials?

Responses	Authentic listening materials	Inauthentic listening materials	Both	It depends.	Total
Number of students	19	3	3	9	33

Table 14: interests in the tow different kinds of listening materials

As shown in table 14, 19 respondents are interested in authentic listening materials, while only 3 are interested in inauthentic ones. However, 9 students say that it depends on the content of listening materials. This data may indicate that most respondents are interested in authentic materials, and some may think the content or topic of listening materials determines their interests.

15. The authentic listening materials are full of redundancy, unnecessary vocabulary, complex sentences, as well as unfamiliar foreign culture, which are much more difficult than the inauthentic materials. Do you agree to use authentic listening materials in class?

Responses	Completely agree	Agree	Quite agree	Disagree	Total
Number of students	5	8	16	4	33

Table 15: about use of authentic listening materials in class

Table 15 shows that only about 12% of the respondents (4) disagree to apply authentic listening materials to English listening teaching, while about 87% of the respondents (29) show positive attitudes to use authentic listening

materials in class. It may indicate that most of the respondents are interested in authentic materials, although they are much more difficult than inauthentic materials.

16. What are the main difficulties you have encountered in listening?

Extracts from respondents:

Fast speed	Background noise
Lexicon not large enough	Lack of language context
Lack of listening training	Unclear pronunciation
Less power of concentration	Nervous
Misunderstanding of idioms	Time limited
Difficulty in getting main ideas and useful information	
Difficulty in decoding long sentences	
Difficulty in getting implied meanings of what they hear	

Many respondents complain that they cannot get real meanings of what the speaker says, especially when they come across long sentences, unfamiliar words and idioms. Sometimes, they also cannot recognize words they know due to the fast speed, unclear pronunciation, background noise or lack of language context. What's more, some also say they are too nervous to concentrate on listening. Based on the previous literature available, it may be found that students' poor listening skill mainly lies in decoding authentic listening materials.

FINDINGS

A. As shown in Section A (tables 1,2,3,4), most of students start to learn English at eight or nine years old, that is, they begin to learn English during the critical period ,during which the brain is flexible and language learning can occur naturally and easily in theory(Hu,2010). However, their greatest English learning problem lies in listening. The reasons may be the inadequate teaching hours, the poor acquisition environment , the improper ways of teaching, or the deep-rooted ideological cause---exam-oriented education.

B. From the data in Section B (tables 5, 6, 7, 8) and extract from responses, we may find failures of listening are not due to the difficulty of listening itself but also the lack of awareness of listening training and inadequate exposure to authentic listening material and listening strategies. What's more, authentic listening materials haven't been given due attention, as they only play a supplementary role in listening teaching.

C. The data in Section C(tables 9,10) indicate that almost all respondents share a correct awareness of the true listening ability, that is, the true listening ability is not word-by-word understanding, but appropriate understanding of real meanings of what the speaker says from the context. Additionally, more than half of the respondents can objectively assess their true listening ability.

D. According to the data of Section D (tables 11, 2, 13, 14, 15), it may be found that almost all of respondents show positive attitudes towards authentic materials. Compared with inauthentic listening materials, they think authentic listening materials are more interesting than the recordings of their texts, and can help them understand the foreigners they happen to meet in the streets or at the tourist attractions in real life, which is not consistent with Peacock's research in 1997. Although authentic listening materials are much more difficult than inauthentic ones, respondents still expect to listen to them in their English class.

SUGGESTIONS FOR USING AUTHENTIC LISTENING MATERIALS IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH LISTENING CLASSROOMS

A. Authentic listening never happens in isolation. They may be integrated with the teaching of other linguistic skills, speaking, reading and writing, or extra-curriculum activities.

B. Students may feel more difficult in listening authentic materials than the usually recorded listening materials.

So, you have to consider to which degree your learners can perform with their current linguistic competence. Just as Caroline C. Hwang (2005) claims that when selecting authentic listening materials, we should take “learners’ interests” as well as ‘linguistic and conceptual levels’ into consideration. She states that when learners enjoy the exposure to authentic materials that are fixed at their levels and interests, they can be gradually ‘hypnotized into’ the rhyme and model of the target language, which is similar to what happens in their native language.

C. Teachers should design listening activities with clear objectives. As these authentic materials have the quality of amusement, some learners may neglect the consolidation of linguistic points. They may listen just for leisure entertainment. After all, classroom listening is very different from out-of-class listening.

D. Considering learners’ ultimate needs, ‘pedagogic tasks’ must relate to ‘real world’ target tasks. These tasks should originally be designed for the purpose of extracting meanings and copying the process of communication in the real world. Exposed to this interaction, learners are likely to ‘interact naturally, in real time, to achieve a real communication goal’, which will be good for stimulating learners’ language acquisition system and lead to increased ‘fluency and natural acquisition’. (Guariento & Morley, 2001)

E. Authentic listening materials used in teaching should not only be text-authentic, but learner-authentic. For example, just as Widdowson (1978), puts that authenticity should involve learners’ appropriate response, that is, learners should be ‘engaged’ by the task. Guariento & Morley also suggest that learners should be engaged in materials and tasks selecting.

F. It is helpful to show learners how to use listening strategies. Hu (undated) points out that in real life listening to a foreign language is a strategic activity. For instance, since most of learners complain that authentic listening situations are in most cases beyond their control. To solve this problem, Mendolsonhn (1994) adopts the idea of listening from the middle of a conversation. In this way, learners are expected to attune to the conversation while simultaneously trying to understand it.

G. Instructors should ‘balance time spent on exposure to these (authentic) materials (Hwang, 2005). He recommends that 70% of classroom time should be spent on exposure of authentic materials, while the remaining 30% be spent on ‘practical structure explanations and usage’. The reason lies in language acquisition theories that stress the need to stimulate subconscious language acquisition.

CONCLUSION

The present study indicates the chief problem of English learning in senior high is listening in terms of the four linguistic skills in language learning, and the two main reasons for this are the age-old Chinese exam-oriented education system and inappropriate listening materials. To solve this problem, the use of authentic listening materials in English listening training in high school context has received close attention in the field of Chinese basic education. In the light of this, two issues are raised: Is the authentic listening material better than the inauthentic listening material in fostering Chinese senior high students’ true listening ability? Is the authentic listening material better than the inauthentic listening material in increasing the motivation and interest of Chinese senior high students and in creating active classroom atmosphere? This paper tries to find some possible answers to these questions by using the questionnaire, classroom observations and some personal interviews. Apart from these, the paper also attempts to clarify the notion of authentic listening materials as well as features and advantages related to them.

According to the responses of the respondents to the questionnaire, classroom observation and the personal interviews with the some of respondents who participate in the experiment, it may be said that the authentic listening material is better than the inauthentic listening material in increasing Chinese students', particularly Chinese senior high students' motivation and interest in English learning and in activating the English classroom atmosphere. The respondents also think the authentic listening material is better in developing true listening ability, since the student who spent his junior high school in Taiyuan Foreign Language School said the teachers there used authentic listening materials very often, and his listening ability is much better than the others in the group. Maybe he is partially correct, since the quantity of input, the teaching ways and weekly English learning hours in Taiyuan Foreign Language School are not compared with other schools in our study.

In terms of the advantages of the authentic listening materials in English listening development, the author puts forward some suggestions on using authentic listening materials. It is hoped that these suggestions and notes are helpful to English classroom teachers of in the Chinese secondary school context, particularly to those who teach senior high students.

However, this study has been limited by some factors. For example, the effective rate of the questionnaire (66%) is not high enough, and the number of subjects in the experiment (only 50) is very limited. Besides, all of the students for this study are from Taiyuan, learning at Taiyuan Experimental Middle School. If the study can be continued among the students in high schools of different levels (other secondary schools in the provincial city of Taiyuan, schools in other cities, county-level schools and rural schools etc), perhaps different results will be shown. What's more, if the present study can be conducted in real listening teaching for a longer period, such as one academic year or even two years, perhaps we'll have a more convincing outcome.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am very grateful for the help of the teachers and students in Taiyuan Experimental School in this study. I would also like to thank my dear student, Miss Yin Chunlei, for her help in preparing the original version of the questionnaire and collecting data.

Appendix

Questionnaire

1. Which junior middle school were you graduated from? _____
2. I have learned English for _____ years.
3. I learned English in order to
 - A. pass GCSE and NMET
 - B. go abroad
 - C. communicate with native speakers
 - D. use it as a tool for reading books in English
4. My main problem in learning English is listening.
 - A. Completely agree
 - B. Agree
 - C. Quite agree
 - D. Disagree
5. Listening is more difficult than the other three English learning skills (reading, writing and speaking)
 - A. Completely agree
 - B. Agree
 - C. Quite agree
 - D. Disagree
6. Have you ever had English listening training?
 - A. Always
 - B. Often
 - C. Quite often
 - D. Seldom
 - E. Never
7. Listening materials used in class mainly are
 - A. Textbook tape-record
 - B. Audio-visual materials & authentic film
 - C. English songs
 - D. Authentic conversation & lectures delivered by native speakers
 - E. English business negotiations
 - F. Read by teachers
 - G. Listening exercise in exam
8. How does your teacher teach English listening ?
 - A. Playing record and checking answers
 - B. PWP model
 - C. Teaching listening strategies
 - D. Supplementing teaching materials with authentic listening materials
9. The true listening ability is not to understand or identify every word the speaker says, but to understand the real meaning of what the speaker says through context.
 - A. Completely agree
 - B. Agree
 - C. Quite agree
 - D. Disagree
10. I will have a good English listening ability if I can
 - A. Get nearly full marks exams
 - B. Understand English films and BBC or VOA news
 - C. Communicate in English with native speakers
 - D. Understand every word in the tape played by the teacher
11. The textbook is full of artificial elements, which extremely different from the English language in real world.
 - A. Completely agree
 - B. Agree
 - C. Quite agree
 - D. Disagree

12. The existing listening materials (textbook) cannot help listeners improve their real communicative competence.
- A. Completely agree B. Agree C. Quite agree D. Disagree
13. Authentic listening materials can help students improve listening comprehension competency and true listening ability.
- A. Completely agree B. Agree C. Quite agree D. Disagree
14. Are you interested in authentic or inauthentic listening materials?
- A. Authentic listening materials B. Inauthentic listening materials
C. Both D. It depends.
15. The authentic listening materials are full of redundancy, unneeded vocabulary, complex sentences, as well as unfamiliar foreign culture, which are much more difficult than the inauthentic materials. Do you agree to use authentic listening materials in class?
- A. Completely agree B. Agree C. Quite agree D. Disagree
16. What are the main difficulties you have encountered in listening?
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