"HEI, YMMÄRRÄN TÄN JENKIN TEKEMÄN VIDEON!"
A study on Finnish EFL teachers' views on using authentic materials when teaching listening comprehension

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Kuunteleminen on kielitaidon olennaisin osa-alue, ja esimerkiksi ensimmäinen taito, jonka lapsi kehittää oppiessaan ensikieltään (esim. Thanajaro 2000). Kuuntelemisen taitoon perustuu myös suuri osa mitä tahansa oppimisprosessia.

Autenttisilla opetusmateriaaleilla on todettu olevan selkeitä positiivisia vaikutuksia oppijoiden kuullun ymmärtämisen kehitykseen vieraissa kielissä: Autenttiset materiaalit ovat keinotekoisia motivoivampia ja antavat oppijoille enemmän itsevarmuutta kielen käyttötilanteissa koulun ulkopuolella. Tässä tutkimuksessa viittaan autenttisilla materiaaleilla materiaaleihin, jotka on luotu koulun ulkopuolisessa ympäristössä aidoissa viestintätilanteissa.

Tutkielmassani pyrin selvittämään suomalaisten englanninopettajien näkemyksiä autenttisten kuullun ymmärtämisen materiaalien tärkeydestä, miksi ne koetaan tärkeäksi ja syitä, jotka ohjaavat materiaalien valintaa. Selvitän myös, miten kuullun ymmärtämisen materiaaleja voisi heidän mielestään kehittää enemmän oikeaa elämää vastaaviksi tai helpommin saavutettaviksi.

Tulosten perusteella ajan puute vaikuttaa olevan pääasiallinen syy niille, jotka eivät käytä oppikirjojen ulkopuolisia materiaaleja kuullunymmärtämisen opetuksessa. Peruskoulussa autenttiset materiaalit ovat myös suurelle osalla oppijoista liian vaikeita, minkä takia myös keinotekoisia, helpommin kuunneltavia materiaaleja on hyvä olla mukana. Tulevaisuuden tutkimukset voisivat keskittyä materiaalien helpompaan saatavuuteen opettajien ajan säästämiseksi, esimerkiksi liittämällä niitä suoraan oppikirjojen materiaaleihin tai kokoamalla yhteiseen materiaalipankkiin.

Asiasanat – Keywords EFL, Listening comprehension, authenticity, teaching materials

Säilytyspaikka – Depository JYX

Muita tietoja – Additional information

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1 INTRODUCTION

Listening takes up a vast majority of the time we spend on communication. We observe our surroundings by listening and receive and interpret messages from the environment all the time. Listening is also considered the most fundamental of language skills: Outside classroom, it is the most actively used skill and the first one developed by children when they learn their first language (e.g. Thanajaro 2000). Learning processes are also in large part based on listening. However, when teaching languages in school, it is the most neglected one of the language skills, often viewed as a skill that develops on its own, without the need for further instruction (Thanajaro 2000).

In Finland, textbooks appear to be dominant as teaching materials in foreign language classes (Luukka et al. 2008), and thus also the listening materials attached to the textbooks. In foreign language textbooks these materials tend to be artificial, for instance passages that are scripted and then read aloud by actors. Such materials, where the speech is slower and clearer, can be useful for beginners and learners of lower levels, but artificial listening materials can also be problematic: They might give the learners a false sense of security, in a sense that if they only hear slow and clear speech in class, they do not get used to the usual pace of speech of native speakers, or different varieties of the language. This may cause confusion and insecurity in language using situations outside classroom, when the language does not sound the way the learner is used to. Therefore, it seems important to familiarise the students with the language the way it sounds outside classroom, different variations, and paces of speech. However, as the digital materials of the textbooks have gotten more versatile and the internet offers countless different sources for hearing authentic language, the materials attached to the textbooks may still win the materials outside textbooks due to the extensive use of textbooks. This awakens interest in the teachers' viewpoint on this issue: How important they consider the use of authentic language when teaching listening comprehension, what kinds of materials they prefer and how they think listening materials could be developed to correspond more to real life.

There has been a great deal of research on the effect of authentic materials in foreign language teaching, and the differences between authentic and artificial materials. The studies, for instance the one conducted by Ghaderpanahi (2012), have shown that authentic materials in foreign language listening practices have significantly positive effects: They, for example, increase the learners' confidence and make them more comfortable with hearing the target language outside classroom, when they are already accustomed to hear it in a safe environment (Ghaderpanahi 2012). However, there is little research on the use of listening materials in classrooms; what

kinds of materials the teachers prefer to use in the first place and how much they use authentic listening materials in their own teaching. There is also not much research on the reasons for the choice of materials to use in the classroom, for instance, why artificial materials are used despite the undeniable benefits of authentic materials. This also points the interest towards the teachers' subjective views on the importance of the authenticity of listening materials used in the classroom.

In order to provide more research results on teachers' customs of using listening materials and acquire background information on their choice of materials, the present study will aim at finding out Finnish EFL teachers' opinions on the authenticity or artificiality of the materials they use in their own classrooms when teaching EFL listening. Moreover, a goal of this study is to bring forward directions for future research, by finding out how teachers think listening materials could be developed to make them meet the learners' needs as closely as possible.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Teaching foreign language listening

In the four-skills framework including listening, speaking, reading, and writing, defined by Ockey and Wagner (2018: 1), listening is considered the most fundamental, yet the most neglected in foreign language teaching (Ockey and Wagner 2018: XI). Both Thanajaro (2000: 1) and Ockey and Wagner (2018: XI) state that listening is the first skill developed by children when learning their first language. Thanajaro (2000: 1) also adds that listening is the most frequently used skill both in and outside the classroom and majority of the learning process is based on listening skills. Considering its importance and role in linguistic competence, it should be self-evident that listening is emphasised in the foreign language classroom. However, this is not the case. Thanajaro (2000: 4) claims that teachers commonly believe that listening is a natural skill developed by students themselves without the need for specific instruction. Listening is also seen as a "passive skill" and not as visible as speaking and writing (Field 2008: 1).

Listening practices in the language classroom were entirely neglected until the late 1960s, although at the time their purpose was to reinforce the newly learnt grammar aspects by showing examples of them in use, rather than to focus on listening comprehension (Field 2008:1). Official listening practices only began to take place in the 1970s-1980s (Field 2008).

Field (2008: 13-14) describes some typical characteristics in listening exercises that have occurred since the first proper listening practices and can still be detected today. He specifies that listening tasks have traditionally consisted of extensive and intensive listening, where the phase of extensive listening can be compared to skimming through a reading text: The passage is listened generally to gain an idea of the topic. Intensive listening, according to Field (2008), consists of listening the passage for a second time, now paying attention to details. Field (2008) also adds that many listening activities have included pre-listening, listening and post-listening, pre-listening containing the presentation of the new vocabulary about to be encountered in the passage. During post-listening, the answers for the comprehension questions are revised and the language of the passage is examined (Field 2008: 13). According to Field (2008), the major feature of traditional listening activities is that they are played multiple times. He specifies that in the early days of teaching listening, the idea was that the teacher could thereby gradually concentrate on different aspects of the recording and learners could get used to the rhythm and intonation of the target language.

Field (2008: 15-21) claims that today's listening practices, although they still include many of the traditional characteristics, have become rather meaning focused. Whereas earlier in the pre-listening phase, the entire new vocabulary was introduced, nowadays only the critical vocabulary is presented (Field 2008). This leads the learners to concentrate on the meaning of the passage, rather than the language. Field (2008) adds that nowadays the context is also presented before listening to the recording, with a principle of what the listener would know in real life before the beginning of the speech. In addition, he emphasises that while the idea of the recordings only providing examples of grammatical features has been abandoned, they can provide useful examples of certain language functions, such as refusing or apologising, which would be more difficult to teach separated from the context. Nowadays visual aids, such as videos are in an increasing use, considering the issue that in real-life situations, there are usually visual cues indicating the context and the roles of the speakers (Field 2008).

Oral skills are closely related to competence in listening, and ESL students often encounter problems and feel insecure trying to comprehend English spoken by native speakers at normal rate (Thanajaro 2000: 2). Moreover, some students tend to experience strong anxiety hearing English in radio, television, or other situations where the speech is fast, and nothing is repeated (Thanajaro 2000: 3). Therefore, it would be reasonable to actively support the learners' listening skills in the English language classroom.

2.2 Definitions of authenticity

To date, the term "authenticity" is still ambiguous for most teachers due to the significant variety of meanings related to it (Gilmore 2007). The definition of the term has also gone through a drastic evolution since the first, rather simple definitions (Mishan 2003: 11). According to the early definitions, authentic text is a piece of language created by an actual speaker or writer for an actual audience (Morrow 1977, cited by Mishan 2003: 11). In addition, Mishan (2003: 11-12) emphasises that an authentic text is created to fulfil a real communicative purpose, rather than to describe certain linguistic features. Furthermore, considering listening materials, the most significant feature of authentic spoken text is its spontaneity (Ockey and Wagner 2018: XV). Considering these definitions, authentic language could briefly be described as the language used spontaneously outside the classroom with an actual purpose.

Thanajaro (2000: 34) and Ghaderpanahi (2012) also define authentic language as the oral or written language daily used by native speakers. However, the above-mentioned definitions do not seem to require the producer of the language to be a native speaker, although Mishan (2003: 12) also includes an interpretation by Kramsch et al. (2000) that an authentic text is one used by native speakers in culturally authentic contexts. The role of native speakers in making the language authentic is still questionable: Considering for instance, a case of a German professor lecturing in a Finnish university in English, the language, according to the first definitions, could be considered authentic: It is produced by a real speaker for a real audience with an actual purpose. However, adding in the nativity aspect, the case would not fulfil the definition. In this study, I will thus be referring to authentic language as the language used outside the classroom with an actual communicative purpose.

2.3 Authentic materials in foreign language learning

The need for and the advantages of authentic materials in language learning has long been acknowledged (Thanajaro 2000: 34) and considering listening comprehension, according to both Thanajaro (2000) and Ghaderpanahi (2012), studies have proven them to be beneficial. The use of authentic materials in foreign language learning has a long history (Gilmore 2007) and the arguments for it can be summarised to the point that it strengthens language acquisition (Mishan 2003: 21). However, the language used in textbooks is still a poor presentation of the actual language and does not represent the real, informal language that is mostly used in speech (Gilmore 2007). The texts in English textbooks are traditionally simplified, for example through morphological and syntactic modifications (Mishan 2003: 23) in order to make the text more easily comprehensible. However, simplification can actually restrict comprehension when

removing crucial elements, and it has overall proven to be useless considering comprehension (Mishan 2003: 23). Despite the disadvantages of artificial materials, Thanajaro (2000: 35) claims that they should not be abandoned, and a combination of both artificial and authentic materials would be the best solution. She also adds that considering listening comprehension, authentic aural materials are not as easily available as usable authentic texts for reading (Omaggio Hadley 1993, cited by Thanajaro 2000).

Considering the certified advantage of authentic materials and problems with artificial textbook materials, authentic input appears to be crucial for obtaining a sufficient competence in the studied language. Languages are studied to get the message across and understand others in actual communication situations outside the classroom. Therefore, it would be reasonable to bring the actual language that one is most likely to encounter to the classroom, which is a safe environment to get used to it and learn to identify the purpose of the text.

2.4 Previous research on teaching materials

The research conducted by Ghaderpanahi (2012) showed that the use of authentic materials in listening activities improved the students' listening comprehension. Furthermore, after being exposed to authentic language, the students felt more comfortable hearing it than in the beginning of the research. According to the author, academic listening materials require background information; EFL students have difficulties understanding the spoken text if they are not familiar with the topic. Pre-teaching the new vocabulary and grammatical features is also mentioned by Kadagidze (2006).

According to Kadagidze (2006), most modern English teachers wish to use realistic listening materials that are comparable to real life, in order for the students to handle with real life listening communications. This has led to great interest towards materials that contain natural spoken language, which are mostly recorded with the speakers being unaware about it (Kadagidze 2006). As advantages of authentic listening materials, Kadagidze (2006) mentions, for instance, them being more intriguing and versatile; they can be handled from a variety of perspectives, such as accent, pitch of voice and useful expressions.

There is little research on the teaching materials used in Finnish EFL classrooms, but according to the survey conducted by Luukka et al. (2008), textbooks are still dominant as teaching materials in the foreign language classrooms in Finland. In the survey, 98 per cent of the respondents reported to use them often in teaching. 90 per cent also often use aural and visual materials attached to the textbooks. Besides the textbook materials, the most used materials

outside the textbooks that the respondents reported to use sometimes, appear to be music by 66 per cent, videos and movies by 56 per cent and online materials by 46 per cent. Textbooks and workbooks were also considered the most important teaching materials. However, this study was conducted over ten years ago, so it is likely that the results would be different today. For example, it is presumable that the internet and online materials are in a rather frequent use nowadays.

In the study conducted by Rossi (2013), where she asked Finnish EFL teachers about the frequency of the use of authentic materials in the classroom, vast majority (73%) of the total of 52 respondents answered *sometimes.* The answer *as often as possible* was reported by 21%, while only 4%, this being two people, answered *no.* The answers were clarified by the lack of time or the intention to use them but not having used them yet. The lack of time also came up significantly frequently in the clarifications for the rest of the answers. Rossi (2013) also adds that authentic materials seem to be seen as additional and unstandardised, not being part of the curriculum. Furthermore, the teachers' comments seemed to suggest that the utilisation of authentic materials often requires extra time and effort, which often leads to leaving them out and prioritising the textbooks.

Ghaderpanahi (2012) concludes that based on the results of her research, authentic materials should be implemented in foreign language classrooms. Moreover, Ockey and Wagner (2018: 1) state that an increasing number of researchers have argued for increasing the authenticity in listening assessments by making them less scripted. However, there have also been arguments on authentic materials not being suitable for teaching, followed by explanations that they are often too difficult for L2 learners and can therefore lead to deterioration of motivation (Ockey and Wagner 2018: 3). Kadagidze (2006) defends the use of authentic materials, however acknowledging that the choice between authentic and artificial materials is a complicated issue. She suggests that both types of materials can be used in language teaching, but their proportion should gradually be changed so that artificial materials would eventually vanish.

3 THE PRESENT STUDY

The goal of the research was to find out teachers' views on using authentic listening materials in the English language classroom; their views on its importance and how easy they find the facility to obtain or produce authentic materials. Moreover, I was interested in finding out teachers' suggestions and ideas on how to increase the amount of authentic input in listening

comprehension tasks and enhance the availability of a wider variety of such materials. Considering this, the research questions are the following:

1. How important do Finnish EFL teachers find the use of authentic listening materials in the English language classroom?
2. What kinds of ideas do the teachers have for developing the use of authentic aural materials in the future?

3.1 Participants

For the present study, 34 Finnish EFL teachers were surveyed anonymously about their views on the importance of authentic materials in teaching listening comprehension, and their ideas for the development of authentic listening materials in the future. Since the study focuses on English teaching in Finland, the target group was limited to Finnish EFL teachers. The participants could also be teacher students in order to find out their expectations or insights considering the research questions, but to clearly limit the research topic, the study focused on teachers with concrete experiences.

The respondents were recruited via a Facebook group of English teachers and their teaching experience varied from less than 10 to 30 years. The group of respondents consisted of female teachers, and it included teachers around Finland from all levels of education except university.

The age of the respondents varied from 20-25 to 51-55. Majority of them were between 31 and 35 (26%) or 41 and 45 (29%). Majority of the participants work in primary or lower secondary school (both 41%). The second largest percentage was upper secondary school teachers with 29%. There was also one respondent from vocational school and one from university of applied sciences. There were no university teachers participating in the study. There was also one respondent that answered "other", specifying that she varyingly teaches in comprehensive and high school. She also added that she works in adult education but did not specify the amount. The respondents' teaching experience varied from less than 10 years to 21-30 years, majority (50%) being 10-20 years.

3.2 Data collection

To collect the research data, I conducted an online survey using Webropol by sharing the questionnaire to the Facebook group. The aim was to reach at least 30 respondents, and when conducting a survey, the respondents' reluctance to participate must be taken into consideration (Denscombe 2014: 170). Therefore, distributing the survey in a Facebook group of

approximately 4000 members increased the probability to get a suitable number of responses. The survey was carried out in Finnish, although the questions and answers are presented in English in the results section. The questionnaire was filled in the respondents' own time, but since they were professional teachers, I expected them to be able to provide relevant answers without a specifically arranged occasion and supervision. Considering the respondent group's education and maturity, I also expected them to manage with the instructions provided on the survey form. It was also expected that the members of the Facebook group would have the required capabilities to fill in the survey, such as literacy, eyesight, and memory (Denscombe 2014: 168).

Since the study is based on empirical information, I found a questionnaire to be the most convenient data collection method. It was also the easiest way to collect the demographical information about the respondents, such as their age, gender, and teaching experience in years. In language research, surveys are one of the most commonly used methods for empirical study (Kalaja et al. 2011:146). Through surveys, one can collect information about the participants' attitudes, opinions and beliefs (Dörnyei and Taguchi 2009: 5), which are specifically studied in the present research, which is why I found a questionnaire the most suitable means for data collection. The study contained both factual, behavioural and attitudinal questions that can all be covered in a questionnaire (Dörnyei and Taguchi 2009: 5), which supported the choice of a questionnaire as a data collection method. Furthermore, while some of the collected data was rather straightforward, the questionnaire also provided versatile information about the teachers' current experiences and ideas for the future to develop the use of authentic materials in teaching foreign language listening comprehension.

After constructing and piloting the questionnaire, it was shared to the Facebook group. The participants were given two weeks to fill in the survey.

3.3 Methods of analysis

Since the questionnaire included both closed and open-ended questions, it enabled me to analyse the data using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Therefore, I was able to examine the information in terms of descriptive statistics, as well as content-based. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods I was able to utilise the strengths of both methods, which can help in avoiding the weaknesses in another method (Dörnyei 2007: 45). By mixed methods research, as the combination of these methods is called (Dörnyei 2007: 42), complex issues can be analysed on multiple levels. A better understanding of the studied issue is gained by

combining numeric trends from quantitative data with specific details acquired from qualitative data. The combination helps to supplement the data; the numeric information gains more meaning from the details and adds more precision to them (Dörnyei 2007: 45).

The questionnaire consisted of nine questions, and the quantitative analysis was mainly applied to the closed, multiple-choice questions, many of which used a Likert scale. The results are presented in figures as percentages to compare the views on the importance of authentic materials given by teachers of different ages and with different teaching experiences. The answers for the open-ended questions were analysed qualitatively by bringing up most frequently occurring ideas and comparing them with previous studies to draw conclusions about the respondents' attitudes towards authentic listening materials and their future development. These attitudes and ideas were utilised in making implications for future research.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Multiple choice questions

Questions one to four in the survey dealt with the demographical information about the respondents, which is presented in the participants section above.

Questions 5 and 6 were statements using the Likert scale and the answer distribution is shown in the figures below. Figure 1 shows the distribution of answers for question 5, which claims that authentic materials should be aimed to use as much as possible when teaching listening comprehension. Vast majority of the respondents (56%) answered "somewhat agree". "Agree" got the second largest percentage of answers (35%), whereas "Disagree" and "Somewhat disagree" altogether got 12% of the answers. Question 6 states that it is easy to find materials outside textbooks that can be utilised in teaching listening comprehension, and the answer distribution is shown in figure 2. As seen from the figure, 50% of the respondents found it easy to find materials outside textbooks to utilise in teaching listening comprehension. The second largest percentage (35%) of the answers was "Somewhat agree", while the rest (21%) was "Somewhat disagree".
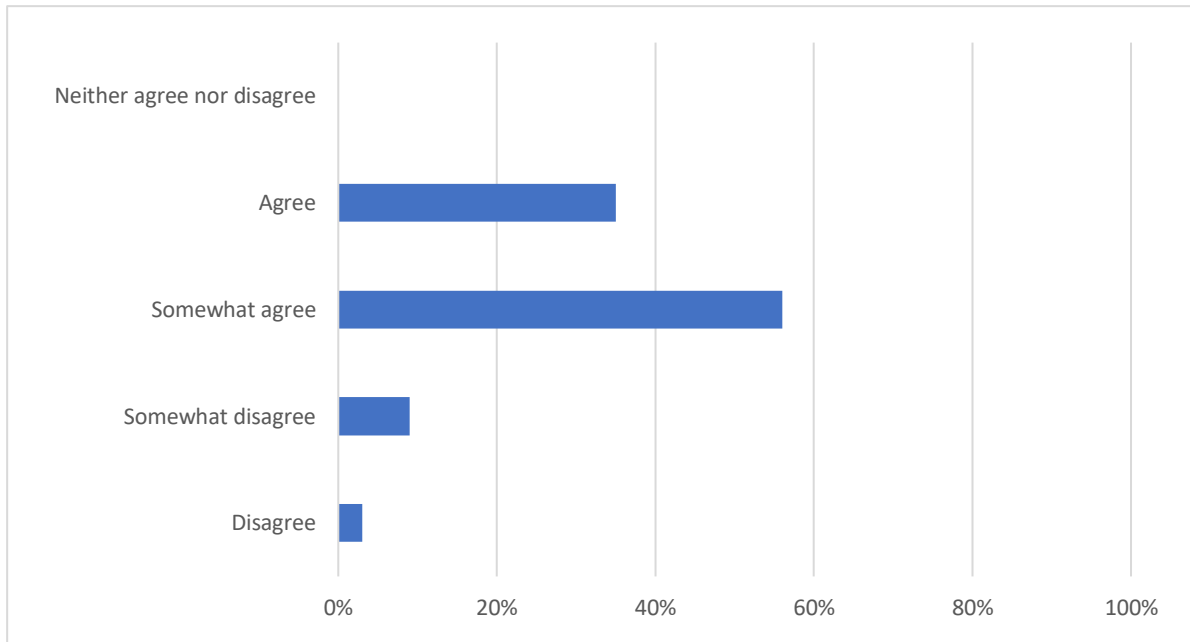
Figure 1: Finnish EFL teachers' (n=34) responses to the statement "Authentic materials should be aimed to use as much as possible in teaching listening comprehension."
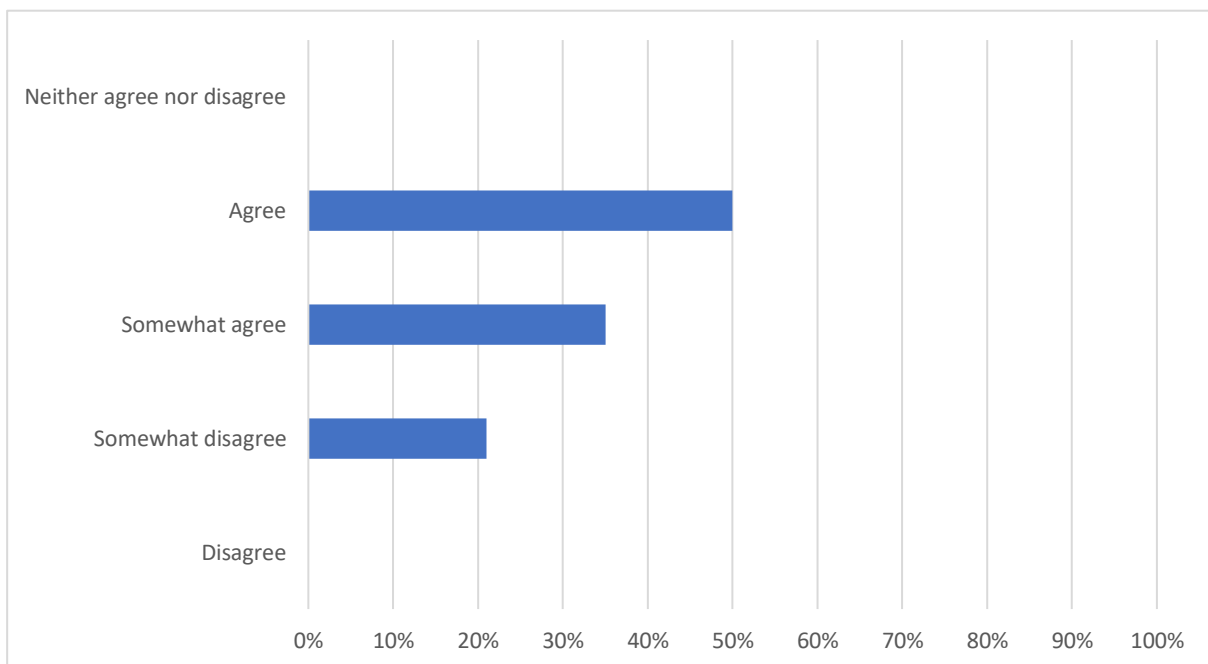

Figure 2: Finnish EFL teachers' (n=34) responses to the statement "It is easy to find materials outside textbooks that can be utilised in teaching listening comprehension."

4.2 Open-ended questions

Questions 7-9 were open-ended questions that handled the respondents' views on why authentic materials are or are not important and what could be done to make increase their use and make them more accessible.

Question 7 was as follows:

Why do you think it is important/not important to use authentic materials when teaching listening comprehension?

The theme that most frequently came up in the answers was the notion that it makes the students used to the language the way it is actually spoken. The respondents also added that it is good to familiarise the students with different accents and variants as well as the pace and possible indistinctness of speech, which, according to one response, "may come as a tongue-tightening surprise" in real language using situations outside school. Example 1 presented below summarises the main points that emerged in the answers:

(1) "Kielitaitoa kuitenkin käytetään autenttisessa todellisuudessa, joten se pääsee kehittymäänkin parhaiten sellaisissa olosuhteissa."

"Language skills are, after all, used in authentic reality, thus they also develop best in those kinds of circumstances."

Many respondents also mentioned that authentic materials are often more interesting and therefore motivating for students, and they can also increase the students' confidence when they understand the material that is being dealt with.

The answers that viewed authentic materials as not important were mostly explained by authentic materials being too difficult for especially students in comprehensive school. Authentic materials may also be too difficult for students whose language skills are weaker than average, although one respondent points out that the playback speed in for instance some YouTube videos can be modified to make them more easily understood for lower-level students. One respondent also mentioned that authentic language tends to be grammatically incorrect. The main problem with authentic materials according to the respondents, however, appears to be the difficulty considering the level of the students, as shown by Example 2:

(2) "Ovat puolelle porukasta peruskoulussa vaan liian haastavia. Joskus käyttö hyvästä, mutta osan on oltava selkeämpää."

"For half of the group in comprehensive school they are too difficult. Sometimes it is good to use them, but some of them have to be clearer."

Question 8 was the following:

What would make you utilise more authentic materials in your teaching?

For this question, there were also a couple of responses implying that authentic materials are too challenging in comprehensive school, which is why the respondents did not consider it necessary to use them more than they already do. Many also replied that they already use them as much as possible.

A major problem that many respondents brought up was the lack of time: When using materials outside textbooks, the teachers have to prepare the tasks themselves, which is time-consuming, and they often do not have enough time to make these kinds of tasks as much as they would like to. Many respondents thus simply answered that they would use them more if they had more time to find them and prepare the tasks.

Another issue that frequently came up in the responses was copyrights and paywalls, as in example 3 below:

(3) "Jos materiaalia olisi helpommin saatavilla ilman tekijänoikeusongelmia."

"If the materials were more easily accessible without copyright issues."

Question 9 was the following:

How do you think listening materials could be developed to correspond more with real life or how could they be made more easily accessible?

Regarding this question, a couple of respondents brought up the advantage of digital learning materials, stating that authentic materials could easily be added to them, as in example 4:

(4) "Kirjasarjan digimateriaaliin olisi helppo linkittää valmiiksi videoita yms oikean elämän materiaalia, joka olisi ajankohtaista nuorille."

"Videos etc. real life materials topical for young people could easily be linked to the digital materials of the textbook series."

Several respondents also brought up the idea of a material bank or a platform where real-life materials with rights of use could be gathered, so they could all be found in the same place. This would also be helpful with avoiding copyrights issues, which have been brought up as a major problem with these kinds of materials. Another issue with the modern materials that was brought up in several responses was that the textbook materials hardly keep up with topical issues, which is why they tend to get old quickly. In addition, a couple of participants mentioned that many topics in the tasks are not interesting for young students and in some materials it is visible that they are made by adults although they deal with adolescents' lives. One respondent also gave the following example (Example 5 below):

(5) "Miksi opettaa alakoululaisille esim tien neuvomista, kun tuskin koskaan missään reissussa seikkailevat yksin rautatieasemalle? Sellaisia keskusteluja, joita oppilaat todennäköisimmin käyvät. Aihepiirit kuntoon!"

"Why teach primary pupils to e.g. give directions when they hardly ever on any trip venture to the railway station by themselves? Those kinds of conversations that the pupils are most likely to have. Update the themes!"

Furthermore, a couple of respondents said that listening comprehension tasks could include more recorded authentic and unplanned conversations. One of these respondents also added that the materials could include more news and podcasts, although there already are some excerpts of them in the materials.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Discussion

Similarly to Rossi's (2013) study, the results of the present study show that the major problem in the use of authentic materials or creation of tasks based on them is the lack of time. Thus, according to the participants of the present study, one of the main resources for increasing the use of authentic materials in teaching listening comprehension would be to have more time for finding them and preparing the tasks. As many of them stated, they do not have time for planning tasks outside the curriculum in their working hours, they have to do it in their spare time with no remuneration for the work. The need for more time is also acknowledged by Ghaderpanahi (2012), who points out that it would encourage to use more authentic audio materials in the classroom. Therefore, as some respondents mentioned, authentic materials

could be gathered into a common material bank or directly included in, for example, the digital materials of the textbooks.

A majority of the respondents to some extent agreed that authentic materials should be used as much as possible in teaching listening comprehension, clarifying that it only makes sense to familiarise the students in the class with the kind of language that they are most likely to encounter in the future. This statement is supported by Kadagidze's (2006) suggestion that the amount of authentic input could be set in proportion with the level of the students, aiming at eventually getting rid of artificial materials. Many participants also brought up the motivation aspect: Authentic materials increase the students' motivation, because they often more precisely concentrate on the topics that interest the students than materials attached to textbooks. In addition, Gilmore (2007) points out that since authentic materials are created to convey a real message rather than to highlight the target language, they are inherently more interesting than artificial ones. The same idea was expressed by one participant in Rossi's (2013) study, who stated that learning and studying occur in as authentic context as possible, and utilising, for instance, the learners' hobbies when choosing text motivates the students. Rossi (2013: 65) also adds that since motivation makes the learning process meaningful, it also has a positive effect on the learning outcomes.

On the other hand, as a few respondents pointed out, in comprehensive school or generally for students with weaker skills, authentic materials tend to be too difficult. One respondent did point out that the so-called "optimised recordings" in textbook materials teach the students to listen and hear and strengthen their belief that they understand the language. Therefore, textbook materials and artificially generated materials can also be useful to maintain the students' motivation by giving them a feeling that they understand and experiences of success because, as both Ockey and Wagner (2018) and Thanajaro (2000) present, too difficult materials can cause frustration and decrease motivation. This is also mentioned by Gilmore (2007), who states that some people reject the statement about the inherent interest of authentic materials due to them being too difficult and thus demotivating. On the other hand, some participants considered authentic materials good for providing challenge to the students, and according to Thanajaro (2000), using real-life materials in the classroom increases the students' comfort level and confidence when listening to the target language in real life. This supports the statement presented in the literature review that authentic input appears to be crucial for obtaining an adequate competence in listening to the target language.

Considering the accessibility of authentic materials, the respondents were rather unanimous. A clear majority of participants considered it easy to find authentic materials to utilise in the classroom, while no one thought it is particularly difficult. Many participants brought up in the open-ended answers that the internet is full of authentic materials and gave examples, such as YouTube, which was clearly the most common source for searching for teaching materials, Yle Areena and Spotify. However, some respondents also answered "somewhat disagree". The main difficulties when searching for materials to use in teaching turned out to be the copyright issues; some materials, such as TV-broadcasts, are behind paywalls and the copyrights in large part restrict the use of TV-shows, films and music. The lack of time was frequently mentioned as a difficulty in this case as well, when talking about the accessibility of materials to utilise in teaching.

When presenting Luukka et al.'s (2008) study in the literature review, the hypothesis was that since the study was conducted a rather long time ago, the results would currently be different and for instance the internet and online materials would be in a rather frequent use. According to the results of the present study, the hypothesis was fulfilled; many participants reported that they already use materials outside textbooks as much as possible, mentioning for example YouTube videos or podcasts as sources for listening tasks. In this case, one must take into account that in 2008, when Luukka et al.'s study was conducted, digital materials were rather rare, while nowadays they are an essential part of textbook materials.

5.2 Conclusion

To conclude, the aim of the present study was to find out how important Finnish EFL teachers consider authentic materials and authentic input in teaching listening comprehension, and analyse the opinions based on the previous research on authentic materials in language teaching, especially listening comprehension. Furthermore, the aim was to bring forward some research gaps for the future development of EFL listening materials by asking the participants' suggestions for making the materials more related to real life or how authentic materials would be more easily accessible.

The research questions in this study were:

1. How important do Finnish EFL teachers find the use of authentic listening materials in the English language classroom?
2. What kinds of ideas do the teachers have for developing the use of authentic aural materials in the future?

A vast majority of the participants in this study found authentic materials important to some extent, with a significantly lower percentage somewhat disagreeing with the statement that authentic materials should be aimed to use as much as possible when teaching listening comprehension. The main factor on the opinion appeared to be the respondents' level of education: Comprehensive school teachers clarified their opinions stating that using exclusively authentic materials is too difficult and demotivating for the students and therefore it is not important to aim at only using authentic listening materials. However, "as much as possible" does not necessarily mean that authentic materials should be aimed to use exclusively; using too difficult materials all the time would lead to a drastic decrease in the students' motivation, which could result in no development occurring at all. Therefore, authentic materials could be gradually included in teaching, according to the development of the group. It would thus offer suitable challenge for the students and accustom them to hear the target language the way it is spoken outside school context, while still maintaining their motivation and confidence and offering them feelings of success through more easily understandable materials. This was also suggested by Kadagidze (2006): The proportion of authentic and artificial materials should gradually be switched so that as the students get more advanced, the number of authentic materials increases in relation to artificial ones, eventually leading to no use of non-authentic materials. Rossi's (2013) study also supports this statement with one respondent pointing out that when it comes to EFL, the students must be familiar with the basics before authentic materials can be considered helpful.

Based on the results of the present study, the main issue considering the current frequency of using authentic materials and the development ideas for the future seems to be the resource of time: When presenting ideas to make authentic materials more easily accessible or increase their use, many participants stated that they would use them more if they had time during working hours to find the materials and prepare tasks for them. This is a complicated issue to solve because this would basically require reducing the time spent teaching or extending the teachers' working hours. However, some respondents suggested on creating a common material bank for authentic materials, where they could easily be reached without copyright issues or paywalls, which also arose as significant problems considering the accessibility of authentic materials. In addition to the material bank, a simple solution according to the participants would be to include them directly in the digital materials of the textbooks, in which case the search for the materials would not require extra time and effort.

A common problem arising among the replies was that the themes in listening comprehension tasks are not always topical, current, or suitable for learners of a certain age. A couple of participants also pointed out that for instance news topics age rather quickly. Therefore, one made a suggestion that some assignments could be made more flexible by, for example, including searching information on current topics and formulating the questions so that they are not bound to the text. In addition, according to one participant, the tasks not being topical is due to their artificiality and that they are made by adults. Some responses hence suggested that this could be solved by, not only recording spontaneous, non-practiced conversations, but also including the target group when designing the tasks and materials.

The present study helped to find out the main problems considering the authenticity of the listening materials that the teachers currently use. Therefore, it can give rather clear directions for the future development of listening materials. However, since the study only had approximately thirty participants, it only gathered the opinions of a very limited part of Finnish EFL teachers, since the Facebook group itself where the participants were gathered had over 4000 members. Furthermore, since the study covered all education levels, it could not acquire more detailed information about, for instance, what kinds of materials are used on different levels of education. In addition, since all the participants turned out to be females, it could not be observed whether the opinions or habits differed between the genders. The study could also have paid more attention to the participants' current habits when it comes to the use of listening materials, since this issue was also taken into consideration in the background section.

Based on the present study, future research on listening materials in EFL teaching could concentrate on making the materials more easily accessible to teachers, for example by including more of them in the digital textbook materials or creating a common material bank where they could be collected and used freely. This would spare a great deal of time and effort for the teachers, and they would not have to do all the work in their spare time with no consideration. In addition, including the target groups in the design of materials and tasks would ensure that they meet the learners' needs and maintain motivation, focusing on topics that are interesting and current for the target groups.

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APPENDIX

Survey in Finnish

Tutkimus autenttisten materiaalien käytöstä englannin kuullunymmärtämisen opetuksessa

Tällä kyselyllä on tarkoitus kartoittaa englanninopettajien näkemyksiä autenttisten materiaalien tärkeydestä kuullunymmärtämisen opetuksessa sekä niiden saavutettavuudesta. Kysely on osa Jyväskylän yliopistolle tekemääni kandidaatintutkielmaa ja vastaukset käsitellään anonyymisti. Tässä tutkimuksessa autenttisilla materiaaleilla tarkoitetaan materiaaleja, jotka on luotu koulun ulkopuolella aitoa viestintätilannetta varten.

Vastaamalla kyselyyn vakuutat, että olet vähintään 18-vuotias ja annat suostumuksesi käyttää vastauksiasi yllä mainitussa kandidaatin tutkielmassa.

Jos ilmenee kysymyksiä, voit ottaa minuun yhteyttä sähköpostitse:
salla.k.jokinen@student.jyu.fi

1. Ikäsi *

20-25

26-30

31-35

36-40

41-45

46-50

51-55

56-60

yli 60

2. Sukupuoli *

Mies

Nainen

Muu / En halua vastata

3. Ensisijainen opetusasteesi *

Alakoulu

Yläkoulu

Lukio

Ammattikoulu

Ammattikorkeakoulu

Yliopisto

Muu, mikä:

4. Opetuskokemuksesi *

alle 10 vuotta

10-20 vuotta

21-30 vuotta

31-40 vuotta

yli 40 vuotta

Arvioi, kuinka samaa mieltä olet seuraavan väitteen kanssa

5. Autenttisia materiaaleja on pyrittävä käyttämään mahdollisimman paljon kuullunymmärtämisen opetuksessa. *

Täysin eri mieltä

Jokseenkin eri mieltä

Jokseenkin samaa mieltä

Täysin samaa mieltä

En osaa sanoa

Arvioi, kuinka samaa mieltä olet seuraavan väitteen kanssa

6. Opetukseen tarkoitettujen materiaalien ulkopuolelta on helppo löytää materiaaleja, joita voi hyödyntää kuullunymmärtämisen opetuksessa. *

Täysin eri mieltä

Osittain eri mieltä

Osittain samaa mieltä

Täysin samaa mieltä

En osaa sanoa

Vastaa muutamalla lauseella seuraaviin kysymyksiin

7. Miksi koet/et koe autenttisten materiaalien käyttöä tärkeäksi kuullunymmärtämisen opetuksessa? *

8. Mikä saisi sinut hyödyntämään enemmän autenttisia materiaaleja kuullunymmärtämisen opetuksessa? *

9. Miten kuullunymmärtämisen opetusmateriaaleja voisi mielestäsi kehittää enemmän oikeaa elämää vastaaviksi tai miten autenttisista materiaaleista saisi helpommin saavutettavia? *