

16-Listening_materials

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Listening Materials Development: Humanizing Instructional Materials

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ABSTRACT

Language program, as any other programs, are led by objectives upon which the other program elements are designed. One other language program element to take care is instructional materials preparation. It is as important as the other components in teaching. However abundant commercially published materials are, the ability to deal with materials preparation is considerably central. Modifying the existing materials is indispensable. In this paper the issue on materials development targeted to listening skill is the main focus. The touch of humanistic approach will humbly be incorporated. In brief, the paper will exemplify materials modification so that teachers are assisted with a model to continue on their own. Prior to the model, some related underlying theories like materials development, authenticity, expert tips, and functions of language will be discussed. The tips and language function discussion are presented to especially provide the insights with regard to humanism so that real life use of language is not neglected.

Keywords: materials development, listening, real life use

INTRODUCTION

One imperative language program element to take care is instructional materials preparation. In fact, it is argued that instructional materials are “a key component in most language programs” (Richards, 2001:251). Richards goes on claiming that instructional materials usually serve as the language input learners receive and the language practice happening in class. Having similar claim, Brown (2001) points out that teaching materials contribute to the richness of language instruction.

This paper centers on the issue on materials development targeted to listening skill. To be more particular, the paper will exemplify materials modification so that teachers are assisted with a model to continue on their own. Initially some underlying theories related to materials development, authenticity, expert tips, and functions of language will be discussed. The last two sub-sections – tips and language functions – are provided to exclusively present the insights with regard to humanism so that real life use of language is not abandoned.

Three Ways to Develop Instructional Materials

There are three possible ways to get to actual teaching materials. In writing their own materials – the first way to develop materials, teachers prepare four elements. Presenting a model of materials writing, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) suggest the preparation of input, context focus, language focus and task. Input can be a text, a dialogue or any piece of communication data. Preparing context focus means determining the topics to study, while preparing the language focus is creating the exercise that gives an opportunity to the learners to analyze and synthesize the language. The ‘task’ element means that materials should be designed to provide communicative tasks to enable the learners to use the language.

In evaluating materials – the second way, teachers are involved in choosing the existing materials or in choosing one of the existing textbooks to use in a language instruction. Guidelines in choosing or evaluating textbooks are needed to come up with the one that best fits the purpose of one’s teaching. Nunan (1995) taking the idea of Breen and Candlin (1987) proposes 34 questions grouped into two phases as the guide for investigating materials. Phase 1 is intended for initial questions like “What do the materials aim to do and what do they contain?”, and “What do the materials make your learners do while they are learning?” Phase 2 is for the consideration of the learners and the materials. Three major questions proposed include “Are the materials appropriate to your learners’ need and interests?”, “Are the materials

appropriate to your learners' own approaches to language learning?", and "Are the materials appropriate to the classroom teaching/learning process?"

Taking Cunningsworth's (1995) ideas, Richards (2001) provides a checklist for evaluation and selection of course books. It includes 1) aims and approaches ("Do the aims of the course book correspond closely with the aims of the teaching programme and with the needs of the learners?"), 2) design and organization ("What components make up the course package (students' book, teachers' book, workbooks, cassettes)?"), 3) language content ("Does the course book cover the main grammar items appropriate to each level, taking learners' need into account?"), 4) skills ("Are four skills adequately covered, bearing in mind course aims and syllabus requirements?"), 5) topic ("Is there sufficient material of genuine interest to learners?"), 6) methodology ("What approach(es) to language learning are taken by the course book?"), 7) teacher's book ("Are teachers' book comprehensive and supportive?"), 8) practical considerations ("What does the whole package cost?").

In adapting materials – the third way, teachers carry out the role of 'providers of good materials'. Duddley-Evans and St. John (1988 in Richards, 2001) point out the abilities of a good materials provider as follows: (1) select appropriately from the existing materials; (2) be creative with the existing materials, (3) modify activities to suit learners' needs, and (4) supplement by providing additional activities.

Richards (2001) highlights six activities to develop when adapting materials. *Modifying content* includes changing the content to suit the target learners – their age, gender, or social class background. *Adding or deleting content* is, as the phrase suggests, done by adding some activities or dropping some sections of the content. *Reorganizing content* is carried out by, among others, arranging the units in what the teachers consider a more suitable order. In *addressing omissions*, the teachers perform a similar job as adding content. They might add vocabulary activities or grammar activities to a unit. In *modifying tasks*, the teachers may change activities to give them additional focus or to make them personalized practice. When the teachers find insufficient practice, they might create additional practice tasks. This particular job is included in *extending tasks*. The first five activities are similarly proposed by McDonough and Shaw (2003 cited in Tomlinson, 2012).

Among the three alternatives, the one employed most is materials adaptation. Having no time to really write their own materials, teachers most of the time select from the existing materials and modify the existing tasks.

AVAILABLE MATERIALS

Existing materials or - using Richards's (2001) term, the 'input' for teaching listening are abundant. Some resources are very popular like TED lectures (<http://TED.com>), most of the videos on You Tube, podcasts on the BBC web-site (<http://bbc.co.uk>), a free community-supported network (e.g. <http://www.classroom20.com>), locally produced English language broadcasts which have been adapted to students' lives, and other audio-visual materials on the internet.

It is not uncommon to have worries about rate delivery concerning these current listening materials. The speakers might speak too fast for a certain group of listeners. Nevertheless, the worries about the speed of authentic speech can be lessened now due to recent technological advances. We can enjoy the benefits of friendly sound editing programs such as Audacity and Cool Edit. When using Cool Edit Pro, for instance, the ratio for stretch option having been set to 80 can result in a welcoming rate of speech delivery.

AUTHENTICITY: PROS AND CONS

Universally discussed, existing instructional materials might appear as authentic or non authentic. The term 'authenticity' can mean different things in different contexts. Tomlinson (2012:162) points out, "... an authentic text is one which is produced in order to communicate rather than to teach ...". In listening instruction, it most prevalently refers to 'recordings not initially made for the purpose of teaching and learning listening'.

The use of authentic listening materials to teach has been much debated. A typical argument against it says "Students who are fine with speaking at their own pace and reading may have trouble listening to a recording that is a regular-speed conversation." (Ghaderpanahi,

2012:146). Day (2003 in Tomlinson, 2012:161) is against what he calls the 'cult of authenticity'. There is no, he points out, empirical evidence that authenticity facilitates language acquisition, and he cites evidence that learners find authentic texts more difficult than simplified or elaborated texts.

Nevertheless, the use of authentic materials is motivating as it provides the characteristics of true discourse (Nuttall, 1996). Finding a statistically significant improvement in listening ability of a group of EFL students by comparing their pre-post test scores, Ghaderpanahi (2012) encourages the use of authentic aural texts inside the classroom to prepare students for independent listening. Another study by Sabet and Mahsefat (2012) similarly found students in the experimental group exposed to authentic materials performed better in posttest compared to the control group. The analysis of feedback survey also denoted their satisfaction and positive attitudes to authentic listening materials hence their encouragement as follows: "... the benefits that authentic materials bring to the FL classroom may be said to greatly outweigh the difficulties they might give rise to." (Sabet & Mahsefat, 2012:219).

SOME TIPS

It is true that authentic materials might be too hard to digest, but it is then the role of the classroom teacher to adapt it. McDonald (2012:2) argues

The difficulty level of a listening *activity* ... is created by the interplay of the text with the task, and the secret to helping students understand authentic texts resides in what we actually ask students to do as they listen. ... It is the construction of difficulty level through the activities we design that makes it possible for us to exploit authentic audio recordings

Field (2008) in Sabet and Mahsefat (2012:220) has similarly argued, "It is not necessarily the language that makes a piece of listening difficult. Difficulty may also arise from the task that is set. ... provided that what is demanded of the learner is correspondingly simple. If one notches up the text, one notches down the task."

The ideas above are similarly pointed out as follows:

The text does not have to be produced by a native speaker and it might be a version of an original which has been simplified to facilitate communication. The task does not have to be a real-life task, but can be a classroom task which involves the use of real life skills in order to achieve not just communication but a non-linguistic outcome (e.g. one member of a group getting the others to draw a replica of a drawing she has been shown). (Tomlinson, 2012:162)

All ideas pointed out above is then basically the same as the suggestion of Nuttall (1996) who has earlier asserted that we can still keep authentic texts by exploiting the tasks themselves and making use of top-down processing more. We can furthermore follow what McDonald (2012) performs: modifying the wording of questions and information in the activity to adjust the difficulty level of the task according to the level of our students. Similar tips worth quoting are presented below (Sabet & Mahsefat, 2012:220)

... it is possible to overcome such challenges [of using authentic materials] through task design. In Field (1998, as cited in Richards & Renandya, 2002) "instead of simplifying the language of the text, simplify the task that is demanded of the student. ... With the text above the language level of the class, one demands only shallow comprehension" (p.244).

Guariento and Morley (2001 in Sabet & Mahsefat, 2012) argue likewise: designing tasks that require only partial comprehension to overcome worries concerning authentic materials. In brief, implied from the review above is that incorporating authentic materials into the ELT classroom is not worthless.

Moreover, Tomlinson (2012) referring to Craik and Lockhart (1972) reminds us the need of affective and cognitive engagement for deep processing. He further argues

Deep processing comes from personal involvement as an individual human being, and the coursebooks most likely to achieve more than coverage of teaching points are those

that take a humanistic approach to language learning and help the learners to localise, to personalise and to achieve confidence and self-esteem. (p.164)

With regard to the idea of personalization, Brown (2006) proposes that listening tasks are expanded to personalized speaking (building on listening tasks to provide speaking practice). Meanwhile, Richards (2008:16) further promotes, "Listening texts and materials can then be exploited, first as the basis for comprehension and second as the basis for acquisition." In short, if we want our listening materials to facilitate our students to attain language acquisition (not only for language comprehension), we need to develop the materials to comprise oral and written tasks – involving productive use of listening tasks thus bearing in mind reciprocal listening.

FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE

Van Ek and Trim (1998 in Richards, 2001) presents 11 functions of language. These meticulous functions are grouped into six key categories: (1) imparting and seeking factual information, (2) expressing and finding out attitudes, (3) deciding on courses of action, (4) socializing (5) structuring discourse, and (6) communication repair.

In mid 70's, Searle (1976 in Levinson, 1983:240) points out five kinds of language functions. The five macro language functions proposed by Searle include: (1) *Representative* – when language is used to commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition of which the typical examples are asserting and concluding, (2) *Directives* – when language is used to have something done such as a request being executed, (3) *Commissives* – when language is used to commit the speaker to some future course of action (when promises, threats, and offers exist), (4) *Expressives* – when language is used to express a psychological state (when the speaker does thanking, apologizing, welcoming, or congratulating), and (5) *Declarations* – when language is used to effect immediate changes in the institutional state of affairs and to rely on elaborate extra-linguistic institutions (when ex-communicating, declaring war, or firing from employment occurs).

Cook (1989: 25-6) considering the seven elements of communication (addresser, addressee, channel, message form, topic, code, and setting) asserts seven language functions. The language functions proposed include (1) *The emotive function*, such as 'Wow Yes!', and swear words used as exclamations; (2) *The directive function*, such as 'Please assist me!', and 'Behave yourself!'; (3) *The phatic function*, such as 'Hello', 'Beautiful weather', and 'Do you often do it?', or for practical ones ('Can you see it?'); (4) *The poetic function*, such as 'My muzic iz Mozart 2' which might mean 'I like Mozart music too'; (5) *The referential function*, such as 'I went to Lombok to visit my sisters'; (6) *The metalinguistic function*, such as 'What does this word mean?', and 'This is what is known as "the eye of fatima"'); and (7) *The contextual function*, such as 'Ok, let's start the lesson', and 'It's only a story'.

Literature reading on functions of language discussed above leads the writer to conclude that there are six language functions (Tamah, 2008). They are (1) referential function which simply means the one to give, describe, explain something; (2) personal function which simply means the one to express emotion; (3) directive function which simply means the one to have or request something done; (4) metalinguistic function which simply means the one to talk about language itself; (5) phatic function which simply means the one to start, maintain and stop interaction; (6) poetic function which simply means the one to 'play' with the form of language.

As language is kept alive because of its functions, language instruction should appraise the manipulation of the functions of language (Tamah, 2005). Highlighting what has been put forward previously, the prime concern should not be which materials to opt, but how to adapt the existing materials. Energizing what has ever been presented in a conference workshop intended to explore a range of reading exercises injecting six functions of language (see Tamah, 2005), and also elaborating a functionalized model of reading materials (see Tamah, 2003), the writer would now like to present a model of humanistic materials for listening class.

A MODEL OF HUMANIZING LISTENING INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

In this section which is intended to illustrate how a teacher can humanize their instructional materials, the writer is taking the following materials (Chapter 5 Language: How

Children Acquire Theirs from *Intermediate Listening Comprehension: Understanding and Recalling Spoken English* by Dunkel & Lim, 2006: 28-33). The original materials are initially analysed for each of the sections to see if all functions of language are incorporated. Then it is modified to fulfill the underlying theory previously presented so that it is ready for teaching EFL colleague students.

The original materials appear below:

I. PRELISTENING

A. Listening Preparation

How do babies communicate before they know how to speak any language? When do they begin to make language-like sounds? Are these first language-like sounds the same for all babies, or do babies from different language backgrounds make different sounds? At what age do they begin to say their first words? What does it mean that children's first sentences are "telegraphic"? What kinds of grammar mistakes do children make when learning their own language? You will learn the answers to these questions when you listen to the talk on how children acquire their language.

B. Preview of Vocabulary and Sentences

cooing noises soft and gentle sounds like the sound a pigeon makes

- The first stage begins in a few weeks when they start to make cooing noises when they are happy.

[etc.; some vocabulary and sentences have been deleted]

C. Rhetorical Listening Cues

In this talk the speaker discusses how children acquire language. The speaker uses certain words and phrases to show the order, or the sequence, of the process. These are words and phrases such as the following: As soon as ... At first, ... The first stage ... The next stage ...

II. LISTENING

A. Initial Listening

Now let's listen to talk about how children acquire language. It may help you to concentrate on the talk if you close your eyes while you listen. Just relax and listen carefully.

B. Mental Rehearsal and Review of the Talk

Let's listen to the talk once more. This time the description of how children acquire language will be given in message units. Please repeat each of the sentences or phrases to yourself silently as you hear it spoken. Remember, do not repeat the units out loud.

C. Consolidation

You will hear the talk given once again. This time, as you listen, take notes on what you hear.

III. POSTLISTENING

A. The Comprehension Check

1. Recognizing Information and Checking Accuracy

For questions 1-3 you will hear multiple-choice questions about the information presented in the talk. Listen to each question and decide whether (a), (b), (c), or (d) is the best answer to the question.

- 1 at (a) birth (b) 4 months (c) 10 months (d) 18 months

[etc.; items 2-3 have been deleted]

For question 4-7 you will hear statements about how children acquire language. If the statement is true, put a T on the line next to the number of the statement. If the statement you hear is false, put an F on the line.

4. ____ 5. ____ 6. ____ 7. ____

2. Using and Expanding on the Information in the Talk

a. **Recapping Information from Your Notes.** Use your notes to recap the information you learned about how children acquire language. Present the information to the class or to one of your classmates.

b. **Expanding on the Information in the Talk.** Discuss with a classmate why you agree (or do not agree) with the following statements:

1. It is very confusing for a baby to have to learn two languages at the same time, so parents who speak two different languages should agree to speak only one language to the child.

[etc.; sentences 2-8 have been deleted]

The script of the recorded talk:

1 What I'd like to talk to you about today is the topic of child language development. I know that you all are trying to develop a second language, but for a moment, let's think about a related topic: How children develop their first language. What do we know about how babies develop their language and communication ability? Well, we know babies are able to communicate as soon as they are born—even before they learn to speak their first language. At first, they communicate by crying. This crying lets their parents know when they are hungry, or unhappy, or uncomfortable. However, they soon begin the process of acquiring their language. The first stage of language acquisition begins a few weeks after birth. At this stage, babies start to make *cooing noises* when they are happy. Then, around four months of age they begin to *babble*. Babies all over the world begin to babble around the same age, and they all begin to make the same kinds of babbling noises. By the time they are ten months old, however, the babbling of babies from different language backgrounds sounds different. For example, the babbling of a baby in a Chinese-speaking home sounds different from the babbling of a baby in an English-speaking home. Babies begin a new stage of language development when they begin to speak their first words. At first, they *invent* their own words for things. For example, a baby in an English-speaking home may say "baba" for the word "bottle" or "kiki" for "cat." In the next few months, babies will *acquire* a lot of words. These words are usually the names of things that are in the baby's environment, words for food or toys, for example. They will begin to use these words to communicate with others. For example, if a baby holds up an empty juice cup and says "juice," to his father, the baby seems to be saying, "I want more juice, Daddy" or "May I have more juice, Daddy?" This word "juice" is really a one-word sentence. 13

The next stage of language acquisition begins around the age of 18 months, when the babies begin to say 5-6 word sentences. They begin to use a kind of grammar to put these words together. The speech they produce is called "telegraphic" speech because the babies omit all but the most essential words. An English-speaking child might say something like "Daddy, up" which actually could mean "Daddy, pick me up, please." Then, between two and three years of age, young children begin to learn more and more grammar. For example, they begin to use the past tense of verbs. In other words, they begin to learn the rule for making the past tense of many verbs. The children begin to say things such as "I walked home" and "I kissed Mommy." They also begin to *overgeneralize* this new grammar rule and make a lot of grammar mistakes. For example children often say such things as "I goed to bed" instead of "I went to bed," or "I eated ice cream" instead of "I ate ice cream." In other the children have learned the past tense rule for regular verbs such as "walk" and "kiss," but they haven't learned that they cannot use this rule for all verbs. Some verbs like "eat" are irregular, and the past tense forms for irregular verbs must be learned individually. Anyhow, these mistakes are normal, and the children will soon learn to use the past tense for regular and irregular verbs correctly. The children then continue to learn other grammatical structures in the same way.

If we stop to think about it, actually it's quite amazing how quickly babies and children all over the world learn their language and how similar the process is for babies all over the world.

Do you remember anything about how you learned your first language during the early years of your life? Think about the process for a minute. What was your first word? Was it "mama" or maybe "papa"? Now think also about the process of learning English as a second language. Can you remember the first word you learned in English? I doubt that it was "mama." Now, think about some of the similarities and differences involved in the processes of child and adult language learning. We'll talk about some similarities and differences in the first and second language learning processes tomorrow. See you then.

Having been analysed, the existing model materials revealed that two functions of language – referential and personal – have been covered. When the exercises are designed by having examples to guide the students step by step, the other language functions can be covered. The following materials development shall exemplify it (Parts A, B, C, and D are meant to cover directive, phatic, metalinguistics, and poetic functions respectively).

A) Form groups of 4 students. Student 1 has a set of cards (Set A) in front of him/her. Student 2 has the other set of cards (Set B). Students 4 and 5 have the recorder. Follow the example and take turn to practice:

e.g. 1

- Student 1 : [gets a card - **'baba'** from a child might mean _____ and puts it on the table]
 Student 2 : [gets a card - **bottle** - and puts it in the blank space to complete the sentence thus forming **'baba' from a child might mean 'bottle'.**
 Student 1 : Tell me then, is it correct?
 Students 3 & 4 : OK, let us listen again and find out
 [Students 3 & 4 listen again and one of them responds:]
 Yes. It's correct. Read it again.
 Students 1 & 2 : **'baba' from a child might mean 'bottle'.**

e.g. 2

- Student 1 : [gets a card - **'baba'** from a child might mean _____ and puts it on the table]
 Student 2 : [gets a card - **cat** - and puts it in the blank space to complete the sentence thus forming **'baba' from a child might mean 'cat'.**
 Student 1 : Tell me then. Is it correct?
 Students 3 & 4 : OK, let us listen again and find out
 [Students 3 & 4 listen again and one of them responds:] No. Try another card.
 Student 2 : [gets another card - **bottle** - and puts it in the blank space to complete the sentence thus forming **'baba' from a child might mean 'bottle'.**]
 Student 1 : Is it correct now?
 Students 3 & 4 : Yes, that's it. Read it now.
 Students 1 & 2 : **'baba' from a child might mean 'bottle'.**

B) Form groups of 4 students. Student 1 has a set of cards (Set A) in front of him/her Student 2 has the other set of cards (Set B). Students 3 & 4 listen and respond. Follow the examples.

e.g. 1

- Student 1 : [gets a card on which **Have you ever babbled?** is written] : Have you ever babbled?
 Student 2 : [gets a card on which **Never** is written] : Never
 Student 3 : Come on. That's strange. You must have forgotten it.
 Student 4 : Really? You never babbled when you were still a baby?

e.g. 2

- Student 1 : [gets a card on which **Have you ever said 'mosquito' to mean 'Please close the door'?** is written] : Have you ever said 'mosquito' to mean 'Please close the door'?
 Student 2 : [gets a card on which **Always** is written] : Always
 Student 3 : Wow. How interesting.
 Student 4 : Come on. Don't be kidding. Lots of mosquitoes all year round?

C) Listen to the recordings again (find the part somewhere near the end of the recordings).

1. Find out the missing word from this sentence:

"If we stop to think about it, it's in fact quite _____ to know how quickly babies and children all over the world learn their language ..."

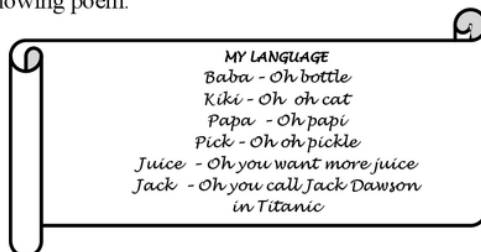
2. Find out the missing word from this sentence (Listen again to the same section)

"...how quickly babies and children all over the world learn their language and how _____ the process is for babies all over the world."

3. Now, fill in the blanks to show your understanding of the ideas in (1) and (2):

Babies and children all over the world learn their language _____, and the process of their learning is _____.

D) Read the following poem.



Now, have fun by telling your friends about your language. Do it in pairs.

Note:

a) Related to the materials design in Part (A), the teacher needs to prepare two sets of cards.

Set 1 consists of unfinished sentences like:

'baba' from a child might mean _____

'kiki' from a child might mean _____

'juice' from a child might mean _____

'Daddy, up' from a child might mean _____

'Mommy, down' from a child might mean _____

while Set 2 consists of words and/or pictures to complete the sentences in Set 1. They are among others: More juice, Daddy, Daddy, pick me up, Mommy, put me down (in words), bottle, cat (can be in pictures)].

b) Related to the design in Part (B), the teacher needs to prepare two sets of cards. Set 1 consists of sentences like:

Have you ever said 'juice' to mean 'Please order me a glass of juice'?

Have you ever shouted 'I am taking a bath' to mean 'Please check who's coming'?

How often do you say 'I ate ice cream'?

How often do you write 'I singed badly' in your essay?

while Set 2 consists of words – adverbs of frequency: always, often, sometimes, and never.

c) Answer key for Part (C): 1. amazing; 2. similar; 3. quickly, similar.

CONCLUSION

Language is kept alive because of its functions. Implied is that listening materials development **3**ight to incorporate all functions of language so that the students are provided with chances **to use the target language to** get the **communicative** purpose. It **should** embed real life use purpose involving the productive use of language hence humanizing it for the sake of not only attaining language comprehension but also language acquisition.

This paper has emphasized on materials development. It specifies an example of modifying instructional materials for listening. Initially it has provided some pedagogical background for the paper. Eventually it describes in details how a particular set of existing materials has been modified. It is the writer's sincere hope that the section containing the added

materials which is merely illustrative can be used as one model for others to perform materials development.

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