

Authenticity, Believability, and Cultural Accessibility of Listening Texts: An Exploratory Study in Omani Classrooms¹

Junifer Abatayo², University of Bahrain, Bahrain Teachers College, Bahrain, Kingdom of Bahrain

Jose Cristina Parina³, Southern Cross University, Melbourne Australia

Kristine De Leon⁴, Sohar University, Sohar, Oman

Abstract

This research aimed to evaluate the relevance and appropriateness of listening texts in Omani classrooms and delve into the connectedness and cultural accessibility of the context of listening texts in an EFL listening classroom environment. It also aimed to explore their authenticity, believability, and cultural values all vital factors in evaluating the listening texts' significance and effectiveness. The data-gathering procedure involved recording and evaluating recordings for listening practice, conducting an interview with Language Studies teachers, and collecting students' feedback on the recording's cultural value and accessibility. Results suggested that students are provided with resources for Western culture and not Eastern culture. The interviews supported this stance as the teachers also believed that there should be more resources for cultural information and societal value. Therefore, it was concluded that research in a foreign language listening classroom should focus on making the lessons more meaningful by exploring the authenticity of the listening materials that give access to the socio-cultural aspect, factual knowledge, and context. Pedagogically, the researchers hope that this study can support the Philosophy of Education in the Sultanate of Oman that aspires for all Omani students to develop themselves in an integrated learning environment that values the philosophy, culture, identity, and aspirations of the Omani society.

Resumen

Esta investigación tuvo como objetivo evaluar la pertinencia y adecuación de escuchar textos en aulas omaníes y profundizar en la conexión y la accesibilidad cultural del contexto de escuchar textos en un entorno de clase de escucha de inglés como lengua extranjera. También tuvo como objetivo explorar la autenticidad, credibilidad y valores culturales—todos factores vitales para evaluar el significado y la efectividad de los textos escuchados. La recolección de datos involucró la grabación y evaluación de grabaciones auditivas, la realización de una entrevista con profesores de Estudios del Idioma y la recopilación de comentarios de los estudiantes sobre el valor cultural y la accesibilidad de la grabación. Los resultados sugirieron que los estudiantes reciben recursos para la cultura occidental y no para la cultura oriental. Las entrevistas respaldaron esta postura ya que los maestros también creían que debería haber más recursos para la información cultural y el valor social. Por lo tanto, se concluyó que la investigación en un aula de comprensión auditiva de lenguas extranjeras debe centrarse en hacer que las lecciones sean más significativas mediante la exploración de la autenticidad de los materiales de comprensión auditiva que dan acceso al aspecto sociocultural, el conocimiento fáctico y el contexto. Pedagógicamente, los investigadores esperan que este estudio pueda apoyar la Filosofía de la Educación en el Sultanato de Omán que aspira a que todos los estudiantes omaníes se desarrollen en un entorno de aprendizaje integrado que valore la filosofía, la cultura, la identidad y las aspiraciones de la sociedad omaní.

Introduction

In a community where English is learned as a foreign language (EFL), and foreign teachers abound, students have long struggled in classroom interactions. Of all the language skills, foreign teachers and lecturers have identified listening as the most challenging skill in their struggle to promote fluent communication. In most Omani classrooms comprehensible input has been used to develop their language skills. However, Omani students seem inactive during activities requiring comprehension and interpretation. This aspect of their language lessons has been suggested to be due to a lack of connection with the culture presented in most listening materials (Al Nabhani & Al Azri, 2015).

Another difficulty is the believability and authenticity of the learning materials available especially those reflecting real-life situations and demands using authentic language in naturally occurring contexts (Brandl, as cited in Ahmed, 2017). Gilkjani and Ahmadi (2011) state that listening has been neglected in language acquisition, adding that research and teaching have been ignored this macro skill. This is mirrored in Nushi and Orouji's (2020) study, which states that listening is the least researched area among the four macro skills, despite its most difficult distinctive feature - indistinguishable word boundaries as opposed to written texts (Field, 2008). Listening, along with reading as a secondary skill, is a means to an end rather than an

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² Jabatayo@uob.edu.bh, Jabatayo@uob.edu.om, 0000-0001-9306-4131

³ jose.cristina.parina@dlsu.edu.ph, 0000-0003-3211-4638

⁴ KDacia@su.edu.om, 0000-0001-9876-8883

end in itself. All of these problems have paved the way for this research to see how listening can take its rightful place in an Omani EFL classroom.

With all the disengaged materials and activities used in an EFL listening classroom, it is common to encounter researchers who still believe that listening continues to be a *Cinderella skill* that is always overshadowed by other macro skills such as speaking (Nunan & Miller, as cited in Wilson, 2008). Therefore, there is a need to address the believability, authenticity, and cultural accessibility of the listening materials and practices to improve the quality of the listening pedagogy in Oman.

Listening Comprehension in Omani Classrooms

Listening is an essential skill with various aural and visual texts in the foreign language classrooms. As a result, the development of this skill has been found to have a positive impact on the development of other necessary skills - speaking, reading, and writing (Vandergrift & Goh, 2009). Listening as a skill is important to develop, yet it is the least researched topic in language learning, especially in the Gulf Region. Most studies in listening focus on the reception of sounds. However, only a few of these studies focus on listening authenticity, accessibility, cultural value, and context. One of these is the study of Seraj (2015), who mentioned that students find it challenging to practice listening when the environment and classroom atmosphere are unfriendly. A stressful environment can compound with other identified problems, such as complex listening material. While there has been a high interest in understanding and assessing authentic listening in general education, EFL listening and other tasks related to this skill are challenging because the opportunities for actual practice are limited (Nowrouzi et al., 2015).

Much research on EFL listening shares the same perspective: listening is a complex skill to master in terms of its characteristics, delivery, and environment. Namaziandost et al. (2018) assert that language should not only be knowledge acquisition, but also a vehicle to convey cultural practices. Attempting to blur cultural sets in learning a language will only delay or even discourage language learning since language is primarily how cultural communication is accomplished. There has been a growing interest in how cultural values and authenticity in listening, particularly in the Gulf Region, may impact EFL classrooms, revealing more valuable insights into foreign language comprehension. The role of culture, background knowledge, topic familiarity, and context are beneficial to EFL users (Aliakbari, 2005; Genc & Bada, 2005; Hayati, 2009; Othman & Vananthas, 2017; Sadighi & Zare, 2006). A study by Tsou (2005) and Liu (2003) revealed that listening problems in EFL classrooms can also exist because students lack opportunities to listen to contexts relating to their everyday life. The study recommended that listening materials involve students' real-life contexts and experiences. Constantinou (2019) stated that participants in his research preferred to be oriented about resources and materials in their courses, so they could know what to expect regarding scenarios and tasks. Considering this point, Cakir (2012) pointed out that listening is not as passive as it appears: a learner needs to possess an average skill in phonology, lexis, grammar, and even "ideological complexities as well as performance factors" (p. 1802) to perform in a language classroom. Depriving them of the opportunity to know the background of the recordings limits them even further from genuinely learning the target skill.

The insufficient enhancement of academic emphasis on listening skills has also contributed to the misconception of listening as a passive skill, where the reception of sounds was considered central to its development. This has posed a challenge to Omani students' listening skill development. Also, it must be noted that English is taught in the Sultanate of Oman to foster international communication. Thus, listening tasks must be examined whether the purpose of teaching a receptive skill is supported through students' context.

Believability, Authenticity, and Cultural Accessibility in Listening Texts

To determine the contextualization of listening texts in an EFL classroom, as they are perceived to be complex, factors such as believability, authenticity, and cultural accessibility need to be considered. As Wilson (2008) suggested, believability refers to given information as accurate in each context. This information relates to students' environment, experiences, and skills. Authenticity, on the other hand, as described by Gulikers et al. (2006), should resemble the world that the students will immerse into in their professional lives and that it "needs to be judged by its resemblance to the working situation it aims to reflect" (p. 343). Hino (2018) also commented that teaching materials must be developed on the foundation of cross-cultural and intercultural awareness. According to Berardo (2006), teachers should be careful in selecting authentic materials in teaching as the suitability of content, exploitability, and readability should be considered. When tailored for teaching purposes, these authentic materials can motivate students to learn and truly acquire the target language as it is used in the real world.

Thus, the current study aimed to achieve the following:

1. Evaluate the relevance and appropriateness of listening texts used in Omani classrooms and delve into the connectedness and cultural accessibility of the context of the listening texts in an EFL classroom environment; and
2. Explore the authenticity, believability, and cultural values of the listening texts used in Omani classrooms, as these are vital factors in evaluating the listening texts' significance and effectiveness.

Methods

Data Sets

This study employed the qualitative approach where data collection involved students enrolled in the COMM3212 course (Spoken Communication/Listening Component) and teachers who taught the listening component in two secondary high schools and a tertiary institution. Data and other important information sources were gathered in three stages: a content examination of listening recordings and listening drill lessons, an interview with teachers, and student feedback. To ensure confidentiality and informed consent, the respondents signed the research ethics form, which is a requirement from the university prior to the conduct of the study.

Data gathering procedure

The first stage of data gathering consisted of documenting and examining the listening recordings used in the classroom. Evaluation of these materials was essential to determine their content and the nature of the topic. Three recordings were evaluated to ensure sufficient representation of the materials used in the EFL listening class. The researchers collected three samples of recordings from a spoken communication subject (COMM3212), where a listening component is included. The listening component provided students with listening exercises and drill lessons, after which students were tested using a listening assessment. Assessment in this course involved both formative and summative tests. Formative assessment was designed to support and enhance their learning, thus preparing them for the summative test.

The second phase of the data collection was conducted in the Faculty of Language Studies (FLS), where three teachers were interviewed. A semi-structured interview was conducted to determine teachers' understanding and observations regarding the content and nature of the topics of the recordings. These three teachers were the course coordinator, lecture teacher, and tutorial teacher who taught the same course. To add context to the evaluation, another semi-structured interview was conducted with selected high school teachers in Sohar to determine their experiences in teaching listening to Omani students.

The third stage of data collection was on students' feedback regarding the listening recordings in terms of cultural value and accessibility. As EFL students, they were asked to share their perceptions of the content, accessibility, and structure or naturalness of the recordings. Data sources were gathered through feedback sessions, short surveys, and a discussion forum from Sohar University Learning Management System (SULMS).

The researchers completed the evaluation of the recordings' content; then, a colleague double-checked the content to ensure fairness in terms of validation. The interview was also conducted to outline teachers' feedback which was considered useful for validation and interpretation. In addition, students' responses on the discussion forum were also considered to add value to the much-needed evaluation of the listening materials used in the classroom. The researchers included feedback from 25 students in the listening class from the usual 50 to 60 students generated through the SULMS discussion forum and WhatsApp feedback sessions.

Results and Discussion

This section provides the data collected from the classroom recordings, teachers' feedback during the interviews, and excerpts from the students' interview, together with their reflections. To address the first objective, it is imperative to begin by providing the type of listening materials used in the classroom sessions, presented in Table 1.

Listening Material Content/Topic	Number of speakers	Type
Rainforests	One	Narration
Travel/Train stations	Two	Conversation
Banking services	Two	Conversation

Table 1: Listening materials

Table 1 shows the three sample listening materials used during the first phase of data gathering. Three samples of recordings were examined to outline the content, nature of the topic, and other elements in the recording. Listening sample 1 dealt with rainforests, where the narrator talked about climatic conditions, flora and fauna, and temperature. Listening Sample 2 was a conversation between two individuals talking about train stations, how to buy tickets, schedules, and destinations. Listening Sample 3 was a conversation about banking services, where a teller and a bank customer discussed bank deposits, loans, and interest rates. While it is important to expose students to different contexts, it is worth noting that the content of the recordings did not relate to the students' environment. This study was conducted in the Sultanate of Oman, where there are no rainforests or schema for train stations. Students may have bank accounts locally, but it is not yet established whether they have experienced applying for salary loans as specified in the listening material.

Teachers' feedback on the listening materials

Five teachers were interviewed in this research (see Appendix 1 for complete transcription), each numbered according to the sequence in which they were interviewed (T1, T2, and so forth). As mentioned, three were teaching the same course; hence, they were familiar with the course content, activities, assessments, and materials used in the listening class. The other two were high school teachers who also taught listening in an English subject. The interview focused on the authenticity of the listening recording, and it was generally agreed that authenticity is one of the strongest avenues for them to practice the target language. T2 stated that "...students [as EFL learners] need to understand the context of the material used. It can pose a problem when students are not connected to the real world." The real world, for T2, is the students' actual experiences outside of the classroom. This "world" was also mentioned by T4, who stated that "...I also hope to see contexts where Omani students can see their own world through the lens of the materials used." This indicates the importance of context and cultural accessibility in determining the nature and content of the listening materials, especially for EFL students. This was supported by Carson (2019), who stated that "a culturally familiar contexts in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning have positive outcomes for language acquisition" (p. 41).

Similarly, Spelleri (2002) pointed out that language, cultural insights, and practical applications are the most critical characteristics of authenticity. Cultural insights are a significant part of the content and play an essential role in students' language development. When cultural norms and values are given importance in teaching and learning, it will help students perform better in EFL language classrooms because lessons and activities relate to their environment. Thus, when integrated into teaching material development, culture can significantly affect students' advancement in learning.

To address the second objective, using the teacher interviews, the researchers evaluated the layers of authenticity by considering practical applications pertinent to helping students understand the value of learning. Exposing students to practical situations can intrinsically motivate them because it offers students opportunities to enjoy language and culture as used in the teaching materials; they gain confidence from their ability to understand more from the realness of the materials (Arley-Fonseca & Brizuela-Gutiérrez, 2020). Also, it gives students the venue to practice the language used in the real world. With this, EFL students can understand the value of learning a language (Saito, 1994; Spelleri, 2002). Berardo (2006) agreed by stating that when authentic materials are used in EFL classrooms, they can expose students to real-life language use. In addition, it makes students active and more participative. Al Nabhani and Al Azri (2015) also added that authentic materials, when integrated into the classroom, could help EFL students know and understand what is happening around them, and using real-life situations provide educational value in an instructional setting.

Regarding authenticity, the result of the interview revealed that there are advantages to adapting authentic materials in the EFL classroom. T1 shared her previous experience in another Gulf Region, where she realized that "the listening material with content and context related to their environment truly helped them develop their listening skill." This validates what Carson (2019) stated: "...Qualitative results revealed that learners felt that such materials improved their listening comprehension, fulfilled their needs, were interesting, enabled them to write more, and increased their knowledge of vocabulary for real situations" (p. 45). This means that the development of the materials' authenticity can help students derive meaning from the language they see and the words and expressions they hear. This is not new. Rogers and Medley (1988) pioneered a study that concluded that there should be considerations if teachers are to develop teaching materials emphasizing authenticity and appropriacy. The appropriateness of the text refers to content and linguistic complexity that can help students develop their cognitive and affective skills, thereby improving

their frames of reference, skills, and abilities. In addition, tasks tailored to EFL students' interests and skills help merge the gap between what students can do and how they can do it cognitively and affectively.

Progression of tasks is another factor that surfaced in the interview. T2 talked about how materials should help *students' linguistic progression* to prepare them for the complexities of listening and other language skills. Linguistic progression using material that reflects their culture will eventually help them immerse in the language of the world, and this can only be possible through authentic tasks that allow for progression in the classroom (Akbari & Razavi, 2016; Harmer, 2007; Miller, 2005; Omaggio Hadley, 2001; Otte, 2006; Thanajaro, 2000). The interviewees also believed that the language used in developing the listening material is important. T1 emphasized the use of simple language and vocabulary, T2 noticed the students' struggle in decoding unfamiliar words, and T3 commented on the levels of difficulty and complexities of language used in teaching speaking which seems beyond the students' current level. All these observations indicated what kind of language Omani students should be first exposed to. Spelleri (2002) supported these statements when he indicated that structure and vocabulary used in the teaching material were vital in preparing students to achieve skills in the target language.

The intended practical applications are the third important factor in determining authenticity in material development. These would make learning in EFL classrooms enjoyable. Students can genuinely relate to learning when realities in their schema are embedded. For example, T3 goes on to ask during the interview, when asked about banking transactions in Listening 3, "...Do you think our students have experienced applying for a loan in a bank? Let it be noted that Omani students receive allowances from the government just for being in school, and banking transactions are a novel situation that uses syntax and vocabulary that they do not encounter at all."

To condense the teachers' interview results, they primarily emphasize the use and importance of authentic materials with cultural access and believability aspects in EFL classrooms to motivate students to learn a language and help develop listening skills. The interviewees also claimed that authentic materials provide students with an understanding of their own culture and context that can make learning and teaching enjoyable. In addition, they significantly help students be exposed to real-life situations and their environment, thus creating instructional value for comprehension and application. They also added that listening sessions should offer more resources for cultural information and societal value to communicate with the target language community meaningfully and thus help the students gain access to the message making them cognitive and affective learning contributors. Most importantly, the Omani EFL classroom should encourage teachers and teaching materials developers to integrate the appropriateness of the text and the task itself and the meaningfulness of the sequence of ideas and information by providing more teacher training in materials development.

Students' Feedback on the Listening Drill and Lessons

Using the SULMS (Sohar University Learning Management System), 25 students were asked to listen to the recordings to familiarize themselves with the content, vocabulary, and language used. After the listening exercises and tasks, a survey (see Appendix 2) was uploaded to the SULMS. Students were asked to answer it to determine their feedback and experiences based on the recordings they had listened to. The responses of the students were collected through SULMS as part of the "Directed Remote Learning" (DRL), an online teaching model implemented in the course during the Covid-19 pandemic. Table 2 below shows the results of the survey.

Sources of listening problems/difficulties	Number of responses	%
Accent of the speaker(s)	19	76
Pronunciation	18	72
Speaking/speech rate	23	92
Unfamiliar words/complex words and vocabulary	20	80
Sentence length and complexity	16	64
Content/context of the recording	23	92
Quality of the recording	16	64

Table 2: Students' feedback on the recordings

Table 2 shows a familiar set of problems encountered by EFL students when listening to native or near-native speaker recordings. Speaking rate is the cause of most respondents' difficulty when understanding

the text. This perfectly corroborates Renandya and Farrell's (2011) article in which they expounded that students considered speech rate the top source of their listening problems. For example, one student said, "...the speaker speaks too fast, I cannot understand his language. I find it difficult to catch up with some words." Since speech rate seems to be students' most serious difficulty, it is not surprising that they also reported difficulties understanding the content and context of the recordings. This was supported by Kaufeld et al. (2020), who indicated that adult "listeners iteratively use multiple sources of information to draw inferences and generate predictions during speech comprehension" (p. 933). Another student expressed similar concerns, "...The topic is very difficult. I don't understand the topic mentioned in the recording. The man in the recording speaks fast and it has difficult content or topic." Thus, if the listener cannot keep up with the speech rate, listening comprehension may not occur.

Students mentioned other areas of difficulty, such as pronunciation, sentence complexity, and unfamiliar vocabulary, which made the recordings incomprehensible. Moreover, in the discussion forum, students declared that the information (content) in the listening materials was exceedingly difficult to understand. One student commented,

...I hope I can develop my listening skills by starting from the use of basic and simple words, then exposing myself to complex words. Listening practice can be useful when teachers provide listening materials with words and expressions that are relatable and applicable in my own context.

This struggle is at the core of their ability to understand or not understand the context, especially some terms, expressions, and language used in the recording. Hasan (2000) and Goh (2000), also investigated listening problems encountered by L2 listeners, and their studies revealed the same results. Students encountered problems such as rapid speech rate, not recognizing words and vocabulary, and unclear pronunciation. Liu (2003) also shared that L2 listeners faced a significant problem with word segmentation. According to Cutler (2000), L2 listeners encountered such difficulty because they tended to process and segment words based on their L1. This seems to be the case for L2 listeners with low-level proficiency (Goh, 2000; Graham, 2006). Hamouda (2013) shared the same results outlining the difficulties experienced by EFL students in the listening class, such as speech rate, accent, manner of delivery, and listening environment.

The feedback provided by the students showed the same listening struggles pointed out by Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011), who claimed that familiarity with the material allows the listeners to use their schema as they predict and absorb the next piece of information, all the while proving or disproving new information. This points to the familiarity of the culture embedded in the listening material. Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) said that "if the cultural differences between the students' own culture and that of the language they are to learn are excessive, learners will usually keep some distance from the target language in their efforts to maintain their psychological comfort level" (p. 983). This shows that listening is an active process that involves several internal and external factors. The latter include "diversity of speakers' accent, the substitution, omission, and addition of certain sounds or differences in the use of intonation contours" (Dang et al., 2021, p. 165). According to Spelleri (2002), teachers should not expect that students can comprehend everything they hear at once because most of the materials used in the classroom are written and developed for native speakers rather than EFL learners.

As Oman is an EFL nation with much work and research to be done in language research and language teaching (Al-Mahrooqi, 2012). An interview with a student confirms who stood out in her ability to express herself. This reflection must be included as it fully supports this observed inadequacy in English language teaching. According to Mallak:

When I was in Grade 8, the very first English recording that I have heard is the recording used by my teacher in our English class, then from BBC News and YouTube channel. I realized that for me to speak good English, I should first develop my listening skill...Listening materials in our class were difficult to understand because the content is far from my own culture, my experience, and my own environment. I am responsible for my own learning, and I realize that a foreign language learner (FLL) like me can learn the target language through a variety of methods.

This student's situation is very common in Gulf Region countries. A study by Aliakbari (2005) stated the lack of ELT textbooks in Iran that help develop intercultural competence and cultural understanding. The absence of believable context and factual knowledge can hinder comprehensible input. Developing listening materials that are believable and factual is an essential aspect of a listening environment. Providing students with knowledge and information that relate to their environment, as in real life, can help them develop comprehension, thus making listening skills applicable and adaptable in the real world.

Conclusion

Research in a foreign language listening classroom explains so much in terms of how it can be paired with other macro skills. It provides practitioners with strategies to make it more effective. However, making the lessons more meaningful require more in-depth analysis. Increasing our knowledge in terms of its usefulness differs from meaningfulness in helping students develop and improve their listening skills. This study indicates that meaningfulness can be achieved by exploring the authenticity of the listening materials. Cultural values and accessibility, two explored factors in this study, also showed promising results in the Gulf Region countries regarding increasing students' proficiency and language development (Al-Jadidi, 2009). Listening materials in an EFL classroom must highlight the importance of sociocultural aspects (context), factual knowledge (believability), and context (authenticity). As Tseng (2002) said, language teaching has an element of culture. Pedagogically, there must be more materials on Eastern countries and cultures, which needs to be improved. The researchers hope this study supports the Education Philosophy of the Sultanate of Oman, which aspires Omani students to develop themselves in an integrated learning environment that values their philosophy, culture, identity, and aspirations of Omani society. Lastly, it aimed to respond to the call of Oman's philosophy and principles of education, which are to support and consolidate values of belongingness and socio-cultural aspects in the quest to achieve continuous progress and comprehensive development to meet the needs and aspirations of Omani learners.

Note: Due to COVID-19 pandemic, this research has slight changes and modifications in its methodology. The third stage of research development is hoped to be realized when physical teaching is allowed in Oman. One of the goals of this research is to design listening materials in a foreign language classroom highlighting Omani students' cultural values, context, and its accessibility in teaching and learning.

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Appendix 1

Transcription of the Teachers' Interview

Excerpt 1 (Teacher 1)

... the materials used were helpful in EFL classroom. Having taught in the Arab Gulf for 14 years, I still find it difficult to teach English language to EFL students. In this case, listening course is also challenging especially teaching students with lower proficiency level. Most of the students struggle with speech rate and language used in the listening recording. I think it is a good practice to prepare students first by providing them with listening teaching material with content which has simple language and vocabulary. I remember when I was in Saudi Arabia, we developed a listening material with content and context related to students' environment and I think it did help develop their listening skill. To develop authentic materials that fit the context of our students, it requires skills and good understanding of pedagogical, cultural, and practical applications in EFL environment.

Excerpt 2 (Teacher 2)

... students struggle with unfamiliar words and pronunciation especially when language used in the recordings are complicated. I can sense the anxiety of students in the listening classroom. The content of the recording also is complicated. Students as EFL learners need to understand the context of the material used. It can pose a problem when students are not connected to the real world. What I meant "real world" here is that, context of students' lives and experiences are important, that is to say, their culture. I will share some questions that can be considered when developing listening materials in EFL classroom: What is the context and content of the recording? How are the materials organized? How familiar are the students with the topic selection and content? How difficult is the listening material? Do listening materials include students' culture? Is the content believable where students can establish truth and beliefs of the content? If these will be considered in material development, this will help the linguistic progress of students and can increase their motivation towards learning a foreign language. I believe as EFL teacher, authentic listening materials coupled with communicative methods of teaching has positive effect on students' listening skill development, their motivation, and aspirations.

Excerpt 3 (Teacher 3)

... materials used in our class were interesting. It also exposed our students to other cultures. There is nothing wrong in using imported listening recordings, but we need to make sure that students are prepared for such aspects like culture of others, levels of difficulty, and complexities of language used, and the situation of a listening context. The materials were helpful, but I don't think our students can cope up with different contexts and situations. For example, listening 3 with banking transactions, our students are not that familiar with banking terms and phrases especially loans. Do you think our students have experienced applying for a loan in a bank? The language is there, it exposes them to new contexts but in terms of accessibility and understanding, our students for sure will struggle. I suggest integrating locally made listening teaching materials to prepare students develop their listening skill. Then, providing them with other recordings that can help them understand and process contextual information. Comprehension process is not automatic; therefore, teaching support and drill lessons are highly suggested.

Excerpt 4 (Teacher 4)

.. there is an issue here. The thing is, we are given listening books and materials to teach the skill, but I cannot remember that there was a seminar, or a training conducted for us teachers to know exactly how to teach listening as a skill particularly in EFL language classrooms. During my CELTA, I used to follow some structures in the teaching of listening, but I don't think all strategies are applicable when you teach this skill to those learners whose language is not English. Students will struggle for sure. I taught in the government school and I hope that the committee will conduct workshops on how to use the listening books in the language classrooms. I also hope to see contexts where Omani students can see their own world in the lens of the materials used.

Excerpt 5 (Teacher 5)

I think the materials need to be prepared and written with a mixture of students' culture, and the culture of others. There are inconsistencies in terms of comprehension and application as target of students' listening skills. Students need to have a specific strategy to help them develop their listening skill, and I think one of the strategies is when they are also exposed to their own society for this will help them establish background knowledge, topic development, and understanding main ideas of the texts. For example, in IELTS, an Omani student who is asked to listen to a different culture, will find it difficult to connect information and knowledge. To help these EFL learners develop this skill, I think a mix of different themes, cultures, and information should be provided as springboard in the classroom. Listening is difficult. The message, delivery, environment and even the listeners themselves are central to this consideration. There should be a place for the teaching of listening in EFL classroom where comprehensible input is the central of language learning, in this case, developing listening skill.

Appendix 2

Students' Survey

What are the difficulties you encountered while listening to the recordings? Please tick your responses.

- I am not familiar with the accent of the speaker.
- Pronunciation of some words is difficult.
- The speaker's pace is fast, hence, more difficult to understand.
- The speaker used complex and unfamiliar words.
- Sentences are too long and complex.
- I am not familiar with the content of the recording.
- Quality of the recording
- Others (please write)

What listening strategies do you think could be helpful to you? Why?