



Systematic Review Paper: The Impact of Authentic Listening Material on Listening Comprehension in The EFL Context

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ورقة مراجعة منهجية: تأثير المواد السمعية الأصلية على فهم الاستماع في سياق تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

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Received: 27-01-2026

Accepted: 18-03-2026

Published: 01-04-2026

Abstract

This systematic review investigates the effects of authentic listening materials on listening comprehension within the EFL context, utilizing the PRISMA 2020 framework. Acknowledging the obstacles students face in improving their listening abilities, the research combines insights from 23 articles published between 2010 and 2025. The findings reveal several significant benefits related to the use of authentic materials as improved listening skills, developing vocabulary, and increased student motivation and engagement. Furthermore, the review underlines criteria for selecting appropriate authentic materials, emphasizing the importance of aligning content with learners' interests and proficiency levels. Despite promising results, the review acknowledges limitations related to the scope and variability of the included studies, pointing to areas that require future research. The results stress the importance of integrating authentic resources into language teaching to better prepare students for real-world communication. Overall, this research contributes to understanding how authentic listening materials can enhance the listening skills of EFL learners and motivate them in their language learning journey.

Keywords: Authentic listening materials, EFL context, EFL students, Listening comprehension.

الملخص

تستكشف هذه المراجعة المنهجية آثار مواد الاستماع الحقيقية على مهارة الاستماع ضمن سياق اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، باستخدام إطار العمل . يعتمد البحث على جوانب مأخوذة من 23 مقالة منشورة بين 2010 إلى 2025، مع تسليط الضوء على العقبات التي يواجهها الطلاب في تحسين قدراتهم على الاستماع. وتظهر النتائج عدة فوائد مهمة لاستخدام المواد الحقيقية بما في ذلك تحسين فهم الاستماع، وتطوير المفردات، وزيادة تحفيز الطلاب واندماجهم. علاوة على ذلك، تبرر المراجعة معايير اختيار المواد الحقيقية المناسبة، مؤكدة أهمية توافق المحتوى مع اهتمامات الطلاب ومستويات كفاءتهم.

على الرغم من النتائج الواعدة، تشير الراجعة إلى وجود حدود تتعلق بنطاق وتنوع الدراسات المشمولة، مما يدل على مجالات تحتاج إلى مزيد من البحث. تؤكد النتائج على أهمية دمج المصادر الحقيقية في تعليم اللغة لإعداد الطلاب للتواصل الحقيقي. بشكل عام، تساهم هذه الدراسة في فهم كيفية تعزيز المواد السمعية الحقيقية لمهارات الاستماع لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية ومسيرة تعلمهم للغة.

الكلمات المفتاحية : استيعاب الاستماع، سياق اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، مواد الاستعمال الحقيقية.

1. Introduction

Listening is one of the four language skills students must learn to communicate effectively. Research on second language acquisition has significantly supported the importance of listening, emphasizing the weight of comprehensible input in language development (Nunan, 2002). As a result, exposure to the language is crucial for students to learn it. Mendelsohn (1994), as cited in Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011), emphasized that listening is crucial because it accounts for 40-50% of total communication time, compared to 25-30% for speaking, 11-16% for reading, and about 9% for writing. In the EFL context, students often encounter many challenges in developing listening skills because it demands significant concentration and attention to fully understand and interpret messages. Hardiyanto et al. (2021) explained that difficulties with listening comprehension vary depending on proficiency level and stressed the need for tailored teaching strategies to overcome these challenges.

One way to overcome listening difficulties is to use authentic materials in teaching listening comprehension, since these materials can be significant in defeating many issues. Rao (2019) stated that authentic materials provide very good resources for English language teachers and allow the learners to be exposed to real-life and out-of-classroom contexts. The exposure to the real language helps the learner to understand how native speakers speak and provides them with good examples of the characteristics of natural speech.

Hardiyanto et al. (2021) mentioned that the students' problems in listening were related to pronunciation, speech speed, rarity of vocabulary, the speaker's accent, lack of concentration, anxiety, and poor recording quality. Therefore, providing authentic materials could help the student to get used to real language and practice it to overcome many of these problems. According to Putri et al. (2019), the natural speech, natural phonological phenomenon, high-frequency vocabulary, colloquial language, hesitations and orientation of the speech are the characteristics of the natural language. All of these features give the students a deep understanding of the language that they may encounter in real-life situations and train them to deal with natural language listening experience. Ahmed (2017) claimed that a first encounter with authentic spoken English could be demoralizing if a student hears only an unnatural language.

1.1 Conceptual background

Authentic materials are the language produced by native speakers to communicate in real-life situations, rather than for language teaching. Field (2002, p.244) defines authentic materials as spontaneous speech recordings that expose learners to the natural rhythms of everyday English in a way that scripted materials, no matter how high the quality of the speakers, cannot provide. Additionally, Bacon and Finnemann (1990) also state that authentic materials are texts created by native speakers for non-pedagogical purposes. In general, any language form,

written or spoken, that is produced by the native speaker in real conditions with real circumstances is a form of authentic material. Adam et al. (2010) claimed that the efficient language use with more emphasis on the content and the students' needs, interests and preoccupations rather than the structure or the text itself should be the focus in the teaching/learning process.

The reason for using language is mainly to be able to use it in real-life situations. The materials should motivate learners to learn effectively. Treve (2023) stated that the use of authentic materials in the EFL context has been seen as a useful way to give the learners a real use of a language, improvement in their language proficiency, and raise their motivation to learn. Al Azri and Al-Rashdi (2014) claimed that without using authentic materials when exposing learners to the EFL, it becomes difficult to predict how the learner will perform in real-life situations. Nowadays, it is easy to access the internet and find a lot of original material that can be used to teach the language. Several types of authentic material could be used; Gebhard (2006) classified them into three types: authentic listening/viewing materials, such as radio news, cartoons, authentic visual materials, such as magazines and newspapers pictures, or authentic printed materials, such as sports reports. However, all of the types have shown their effectiveness, but the systematic paper mainly focused on one type, which is the authentic listening materials.

Many scholars support the use of authentic listening materials to develop listening comprehension in EFL contexts. Akbari and Razavi (2016) referred to the importance of authentic listening materials to develop the communication skills needed for effective real-life communication. According to Trave (2023), authentic listening materials enhance listening comprehension, boost learners' interest in the language, provide examples of actual language usage, and develop critical listening skills. Moreover, Lembarek (2024) agreed with Trave, adding more to the role of authentic listening materials in helping learners understand the socio-cultural norms and customs embedded in the language.

This study uses a systematic literature review as an approach to provide a deeper understanding of the role of authentic listening material in developing listening comprehension in an EFL context. However, authentic listening material has been seen as an effective way to develop listening skills in EFL education (Sabet & Mahsefat, 2012). Furthermore, the frequent use of authentic material could lead to a noticeable improvement in the students' listening skills (Lemberak, 2024). Additionally, the teachers and the students have shown a positive attitude toward the use of authentic listening materials, along with an increase in the students' motivation, improving the overall proficiency, and knowing how to use language in real conditions. However, those studies have focused on testing the impact of authentic listening materials without detailing concerns about what kind of improvement these materials could provide to EFL learners and the best criteria that could be used in these conditions. Also, this type of research, a systematic review paper, has not been conducted in this area.

This systematic review paper is conducted to answer the following questions:

What kind of improvements could authentic listening materials present to EFL learners in listening comprehension?

What are the selection criteria that should be followed in selecting these materials?

2. Method

This study used a systematic literature review guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) (2020). A systematic review paper can answer questions that others cannot, identify problems in primary research, and evaluate theories about how and why phenomena occur (Sohrabi et al., 2021). This version includes more detailed information about each item in the checklist, which can facilitate the process of searching. This study primarily involves three basic steps. The PRISMA flow diagram will help make these stages transparent. First, identification shows the database and the tools used to collect data. Second, screening helps exclude studies that do not meet the required standards. Third, the eligibility stage ensures that the remaining studies fulfill the necessary criteria. These steps are used to ensure the results are valid and free from bias.

2.1 Search Formula Strategy

To find the literature on the impact of authentic listening materials on listening skills, the researcher searched several databases, including Semantic Scholar, Academia.edu, and Google Scholar, using the following search strings:

- (“authentic listening materials” OR “authentic audio materials” OR “authentic aural materials” OR “authentic materials”) AND (“listening comprehension” OR “listening skill”): This string included the main elements of the study to find more studies that did not include more detailed titles (e.g., Quoc & Trang, 2024).
- (“the effectiveness” OR “impact” OR “effect”) AND (“authentic listening materials” OR “authentic audio materials” OR “authentic aural materials” OR “authentic materials”) AND (“EFL context” OR “EFL classroom” OR “EFL learner”) AND (“listening comprehension” OR “listening skill”): This string included all key elements. Using detailed keywords helped to expand the research scope and find more studies.

2.2 Inclusion Criteria

During the screening stage, the included literature met the following inclusion criteria:

- Papers published from 2010 to 2025.
- Papers targeted language teaching in the EFL context.
- Studies related to listening skills.
- Articles or papers dealt with authentic listening material.

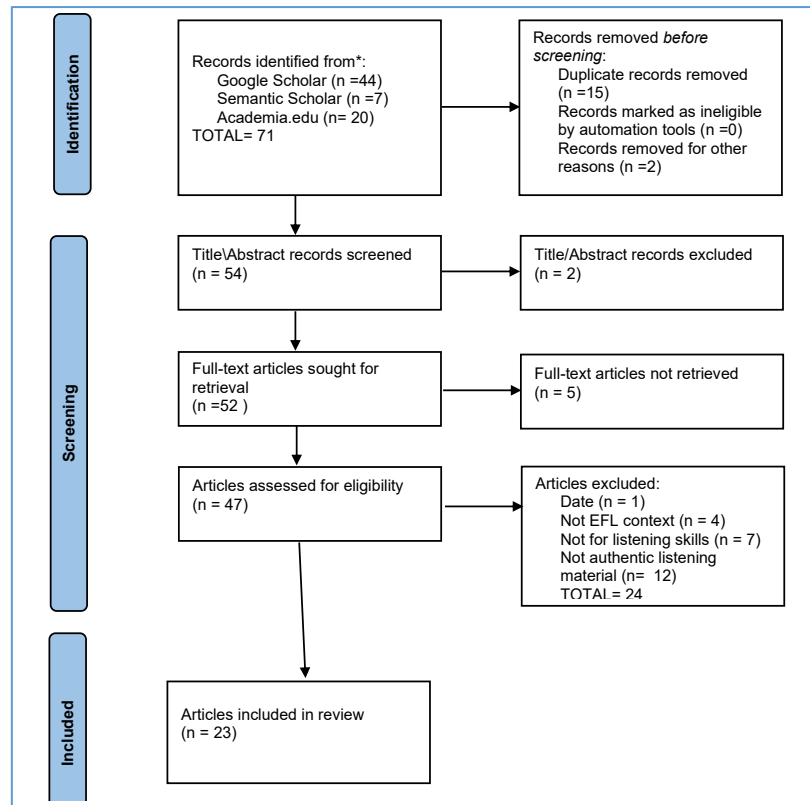
2.3 Exclusion Criteria

Additionally, the exclusion criteria were employed to screen the identified studies and papers:

- Papers published before 2010.
- Papers not related to the EFL context.
- Studies of other skills rather than listening
- Articles related to the other types of authentic material.

2.4 Systematic Review Process

The review process includes several stages, such as identification, screening, and eligibility. The following is a chart of the systematic review process.



Picture1. Systematic Review Process.

The identification of defined keywords was the first step. In this step, keywords were inserted using search strategies in the Google Scholar, Semantic Scholar, and Academia.edu databases. The search results in Google Scholar generated 44, the search results in Semantic Scholar generated 6, and the search results in Academia.edu generated 20. The total number of articles was 71. At the same stage, 17 articles were removed due to duplication and other reasons, resulting in 54 articles being included.

During the screening stage, 54 articles were selected based on keywords in the titles. The screening process first excluded 2 articles based on their titles and abstracts. Then, after retrieving full texts, 5 studies were also excluded. This left 47 articles for the eligibility stage. During this stage, 24 articles were removed according to exclusion criteria. Ultimately, 23 articles met the criteria for analysis. The articles were analyzed collectively, focusing on the research questions previously formulated.

3. Results

3.1 The improvements of authentic listening materials for EFL learners in listening comprehension.

Integrating authentic listening materials into English language teaching contexts for non-native speakers leads to significant improvements in students' listening skills and prepares them for effective communication in real-life situations.

3.1.1 Increased Listening Proficiency

Many studies have been conducted to investigate the role of authentic audio materials in developing listening comprehension skills. EFL students who were exposed to authentic listening materials showed significant improvement in their listening comprehension skills (Mousavi & Iravani, 2011; Lembarek, 2024; Rodngam & Somphong, 2016; Refia, 2018; Hamouda, 2020). According to Hamouda (2020) and Kristiana (2018), students may become

accustomed to the rhythm, accents, and colloquial expressions of native speakers by exposing them to language in real-life contexts through authentic materials. Authentic materials provide exposure to language in real-life contexts, helping students get used to the rhythm, accents, and colloquial expressions of native speakers. They pointed out that this exposure improves their ability to understand genuine speech, which is often more challenging than written texts. Additionally, Mallapiang (2014) specifically focused on understanding inferred meaning, and the results showed that students were able to comprehend and interact with spoken language after being exposed to authentic listening materials. Moreover, Alijani et al. (2014), Putri et al. (2018), and Abebe et al. (2022) explained that learners who were exposed to authentic listening materials showed a significantly greater understanding of listening compared to those who used non-authentic materials, in addition to enhancing learners' ability to process spoken language, which led to improved listening skills.

Saida found (2013) that students develop better listening skills by training with materials that reflect real-life communication situations, including understanding various accents, speech rates, and informal language structures. Sabet & Mahsefat (2012) explored that exposure to authentic listening materials leads to greater performance in listening comprehension tests in their study. Similarly, Tiven and Nikijuluw (2025) and Zhafarghandi et al. (2014) mentioned that students have shown significant improvements in their listening comprehension, suggesting that being exposed to authentic materials aided them in understanding spoken language better. Abu Hatab (2010) and Ahmadi (2016) explained that regular practice using authentic materials showed great improvements in listening fluency, enabling learners to process spoken language more quickly and accurately.

Authentic materials improve students' ability to understand spoken English, as they expose learners to the use of language in real-life situations, including different accents, intonations, and contextual meanings (Wulandari et al., 2025). Ortega and Contreras (2021) found that learners were able to achieve the comprehension goals in the listening task using authentic materials, which included accents, slang, and unknown vocabulary. Moreover, Ghaderpanahi (2012) stressed that critical listening skills can be developed through regular exposure to authentic speech, enabling individuals to distinguish between different sounds and understand nuances in spoken language.

3.1.2. *Development of listening strategies*

Authentic material exposure can help the students to develop their strategies in comprehending meaning from context, in addition to dealing with unfamiliar features of language (Wulandari et al., 2025). Kochkorova (2025) reported that strategies such as keyword detection and the inference of meaning from context can also be learned from authentic materials, which helps to understand spoken language. Additionally, Alamri (2025) claimed that authentic materials encourage the use of effective listening strategies, such as predicting content and recognizing contextual clues. Similarly, Ghaderpanahi (2012) and Saida (2013) emphasized that authentic listening materials help students to employ various listening strategies, such as listening for gist or specific information, which are crucial for effective comprehension in real-life scenarios. Zhafarghandi et al. (2014) emphasized that this exposure improves students' strategies to understand meaning, even when the structures are complex and the accents are different.

Tiven and Nikijuluw (2025) mentioned that students reported improvements in their ability to take effective notes while listening. The main reason for that was related to developing their ability to identify the key information and summarize the content, which are both important for academic success. Refai (2018) noted that learners often reflected on their experiences with these materials, recalling vocabulary and phrases more easily. Repeated exposure to familiar contexts in authentic settings aids memory retention and improves their ability to use the

language actively. Ortage and Contreras (2021) found that the learners showed effectiveness in the use of the listening strategy.

3.1.3. Motivation and Engagement

Another improvement found by many scholars regarding the use of authentic listening materials was a source of motivation and engagement of students during classes. Both engagement and motivation are higher for students who are exposed to authentic material during listening activities, resulting in increased learning outcomes (Gunduz et al., 2017; Wulandari et al., 2025). According to Kochkorova (2025) and Ghaderpanahi (2012), students exposed to authentic materials provide a high level of interest and enjoyment, leading to a more motivating and engaging learning process compared to traditional listening exercises. Moreover, Alamri (2025) and Putri et al. (2018) found that these materials could be more engaging and related to learners' lives, motivating them to learn and train their listening skills. This kind of engagement is essential for effective listening practice; additionally, it helps students to focus on their learning and improve their language.

Learners tend to be more engaged with authentic materials than the simplified version. The reason for this engagement is that the authenticity of the materials provides a real connection to the language in a real-life context, which fosters greater interest and motivation among the students (Zhafarghandi et al., 2014). A dynamic and engaging environment in the EFL classroom can be created for learners using authentic materials. Students report feeling more motivated and enthusiastic when interacting with real-world content, which leads to increased participation and interest in the subject matter (Rodngam & Somphong, 2016; Lembarek, 2024; Saida, 2013). This is important for language learning, as it supports the students to be more involved in the learning process (Mousavi & Irvani, 2012). This authenticity attracts students' attention and develops a relevant sense in the language study. Accordingly, Abu Hatab (2010) explained that traditional textbook content cannot capture students' interest as materials such as interviews, podcasts, and real conversations can. This kind of interest and engagement stimulates active participation, making the learning more pleasurable and effective. Husnawati (2024) explained that exposure to diverse accents through authentic materials helps students recognize the variations in spoken English. This familiarity can make them more comfortable with understanding and using English in real-world situations, thus enhancing their listening skills and cultural competence.

Tiven and Nikijuluw (2025) utilized self-selected authentic materials in their study. The opportunity to choose materials that align with the students' interests led to a higher engagement level. Students found the projects enjoyable and were more motivated to participate actively in their learning. Kristiana (2018) highlighted that authentic materials made learning more enjoyable and relevant for students. Teachers found that using content such as movies and music increases the participation and enthusiasm of the students. This motivation helps the students with language learning and encourages them to practice and improve their skills effectively. The study by Refai (2018) found that when the students listen to materials such as movies, music, and news show more engagement in the class. This engagement stems from their interest in contemporary topics and formats they are familiar with. The pleasurable nature of the authentic materials creates a positive learning environment, which can enhance participation in listening activities. Alijani et al. (2014) added that the students exposed to authentic materials expressed satisfaction and increased interest in listening activities.

3.1.4 Cultural awareness

Studies have explored the role of authentic listening material to enhance the cultural awareness of the students. Alamri (2025) and Gunduz et al. (2017) argued that through authentic listening materials, learners obtain insights into cultural aspects, idiomatic expressions, and real-life situations, additionally enhancing their ability to comprehend various accents and dialects.

Zhafarghandi et al. (2014) found that authentic materials often present cultural conditions that are integral to language use. This exposure can contribute to enriching learners' understanding of the language and its practical applications in real-world circumstances. Refai (2018) mentioned that authentic materials offer students cultural and social insights that are essential to understand the language. The study indicates that when learners face reference to culture and real-life context, they better absorb the intended meanings and respond to conversations appropriately, enhancing their comprehension skills. Likewise, Alijani et al. (2014) mentioned that authentic materials expose learners to a wide range of linguistic features, including idiomatic expressions, colloquialisms, and cultural references. Comprehending these elements helps students to develop their vocabulary and supports them in recognizing and using language in various contexts, which is essential for effective communication.

The use of authentic listening materials improves cultural competence among the learners by presenting some aspects of socio-cultural contexts inserted within the language. Being exposed to these materials develops the students' understanding of some aspects of language use among native speakers, thereby improving their ability to be more engaged in meaningful communications (Rodngam & Somphong, 2016). Since the students confront real situations through authentic resources, they develop a deep application of the cultural aspects of language, which is effective for successful communication (Saida, 2013). According to Kristiana (2018), authentic materials present an awareness of native speakers' culture, which is significant for language learners. The study revealed that through an audio cultural context, students achieve a better understanding of social norms and practices. The learners can be able to communicate effectively in real-life situations through developing their cultural awareness. Furthermore, Abu Hatab (2010) and Husnawati (2024) explained that authentic materials commonly include cultural references and idiomatic phrases that are essential for grasping the subtleties of a language. These cultural conditions increase the learning experience and support students in managing social interactions in English-speaking settings.

3.1.5 Exposure to real language use

Authentic materials help learners prepare for real-life conversations by exposing them to natural language as it is used outside the classroom (Wulandari et al., 2025; Gunduz, 2017). Kochkorova (2025) pointed out that a real speech sense as rhythms, intonations, and connected speech, can be presented to students through authentic materials, which cannot be presented naturally in the scripted dialogues in textbooks. Similarly, Abebe et al. (2022) reported that exposing students to authentic materials enhances their learning of real language usage, which plays an important role in developing their listening skills and enables them to understand spoken English in a practical situation. Moreover, these materials expose the students to natural, everyday language, helping them better understand real-life communication (Alamri, 2025; Putri et al., 2018). Additionally, Ghaderpanahi (2012) and Zhafarghandi et al. (2014) suggested that practicing with authentic materials that mirror what the students could face outside the classroom makes them ready for real listening situations, such as conversations, media, and academic lectures.

Natural hesitations, interruptions, and informal speech are some features of genuine communication patterns that could be presented through authentic materials, which are often missed in traditional learning resources. This kind of real language makes the students ready for actual interactions with native speakers, so they can cope with the complexities of everyday conversations (Rodngam & Somphong, 2016; Saida, 2013). Listening skills and overall language proficiency can be enhanced by exposing the students to real language scenarios, preparing them for practical communication challenges. Additionally, Hamouda (2020) added that authentic materials use a connected classroom environment to real-life circumstances, so the language learning experience is more applicable and meaningful. The enthusiasm of

learning process increases when the students connect personally with real content, leading to a more positive attitude towards language learning.

According to Refai (2018), authentic materials represent the real language used in everyday situations. The study stressed that exposure to such materials allows EFL students to receive natural speech patterns, slang, and colloquialisms. This conflicts with scripted language, probably found in textbooks, helping learners know the nuances of spoken English. Similarly, Alijani et al. (2014) noticed that students might be better prepared for real-life contexts encountering spoken language by authentic materials, enabling them to adapt to various linguistic contexts outside the classroom. The gap between academic learning and practical language use can be bridged through these materials, making students more competent communicators. Abu Hatab (2010) clarified that authentic materials reflect genuine use of language, preparing students to engage with content that resembles real-life contexts. This relevance increases motivation, as students can practically see the application of their learning.

3.1.6 Enhanced vocabulary acquisition and structure realization

Exposing students to authentic listening materials makes them able to handle diverse vocabulary and colloquial expressions, leading to a boost in their overall language proficiency (Wulandari et al., 2025; Putri et al., 2018). Additionally, Alamri (2025) explained that these materials are probably rich in vocabulary and include correct grammar usage, allowing the learners to develop language skills more effectively. Likewise, Gunduz et al. (2017) found that authentic listening materials help to improve vocabulary knowledge and the pronunciation of the learners. These materials provide learners with opportunities to be exposed to everyday vocabulary and colloquial expressions, making understanding spoken English in various contexts easier for learners (Ghaderpanahi, 2012). Additionally, Zhafarghandi et al. (2014) explored that acquiring new vocabulary and grammatical structures is likely through interaction with authentic texts. Therefore, knowing how language functions in different contexts and enhancing the overall proficiency can be achieved through this exposure.

Authentic listening materials offer great opportunities for the students to encounter new vocabulary and idiomatic expressions in context, helping retention and facilitating practical application in real conversation (Rodngam & Somphong, 2016; Saida, 2013). Learners enlarge their linguistic repertoire, enabling them to be effective communicators (Mousavi & Iravani, 2012). Students internalize many vocabularies and phrases that are frequently used in everyday conversations through exposure to actual language. Ortega and Contreras (2020) proved that authentic listening materials enable learners to acquire new vocabulary, understand contextual language, and be able to use it in different spoken contexts. Additionally, Tiven and Nikijuluw (2025) found that students noticed an increase in their vocabulary, particularly in recognizing informal language, idioms, and slang. Since the language of authentic materials is not typically found in textbooks, engaging with this language enhances their ability to communicate naturally.

Kristiana (2018) found that authentic materials presented a generous amount of new vocabulary in context to the students. For instance, through songs, learners can encounter many words or phrases and expressions that are commonly found in everyday situations. This contextual learning helps retention and enables students to comprehend how vocabulary is used in various contexts. Additionally, Abu Hatab (2010) explained that authentic listening materials give students the opportunity to be exposed to vocabulary in context, which facilitates understanding and retention. Learning contextually helps students to get the meaning and usage of new words more effectively than isolated lists of vocabulary.

3.1.7 Other improvements mentioned by some studies.

Two studies reported that authentic listening materials enhance cognitive engagement. To comprehend authentic materials, learners need to actively filter, decode, and construct

meaning, thereby developing their cognitive processes for listening (Wulandari et al., 2025). Additionally, Alamri (2025) noted that listening to authentic materials can improve metacognitive skills, helping learners reflect more on their listening processes and strategies. Moreover, a study mentioned that authentic materials could achieve building confidence. Familiarity, authentic listening materials can build learners' confidence in understanding spoken language, specifically in real contexts where they may encounter native speakers (Saida, 2013).

Connection to Academic Success was also mentioned by Abebe et al. (2022) and Mousavi and Iravani (2012). The results suggested that enhancing listening comprehension through authentic materials may lead to better overall academic achievement, particularly in situations where English is the medium of instruction. Furthermore, such materials have an important role in critical thinking development. By engaging learners with authentic materials, they can be encouraged to analyze and interpret information critically. The study found that the students were able to think critically about the presented materials, discussing themes and ideas found in the content. This skill is extremely important for promoting independent learners who can navigate real-world context (Kristiana, 2018; Abu Hatab, 2010). Authentic materials boost learners to develop critical listening skills, in which inferencing meaning, understanding context, and responding to various listening challenges are required to comprehend meanings (Saida, 2013). Additionally, Husnawati (2024) found that these materials developed the sense of curiosity of the students, and they tried to find additional references. The authenticity of the materials often contributes to sparking interest in related topics, encouraging students to explore further. Therefore, independent learning can be achieved by this curiosity, where students take the initiative to search for additional resources or information, enhancing their overall understanding.

3.2 The criteria for authentic material selection

Several studies on authentic materials have discussed criteria for selecting authentic materials. Kochkorova (2025) suggested that the material should be chosen based on the learners' proficiency level, with content that is challenging yet understandable. Alamri (2025) added that, in addition to the students' level, their interests and needs should also be considered. These materials motivate learners because they include interesting topics and can be used in daily life. Additionally, Zhafarghandi et al. (2014) observed that various factors influence material selection. The language level was considered the most important factor. Teachers prioritized students' interests second and their needs third. Furthermore, teachers considered the percentage of new vocabulary as the fourth factor and the course objectives as the fifth. The length of the text, the complexity of grammatical structures, and the type of text were also taken into account. Saida (2013) noticed in the study that not all teachers randomly choose authentic materials. However, the teacher focused on their students' needs and levels when selecting the materials. In research done by Tiven and Nikijuluw (2025), students selected the materials by themselves. They found that students selected materials based on their interests in the topic, the availability of transcripts or subtitles, and recommendations from other students. Selecting listening materials for the study was also influenced by the difficulty degree.

4. Discussion and conclusion

This study aimed to explore the improvements and criteria that can be achieved by using authentic listening materials to enhance listening skills for EFL students. Through a systematic review of 23 articles, two of which are master's theses, the findings summarize several key improvements achieved by authentic listening materials, along with criteria for choosing these materials. Each of these findings contributes significantly to understanding the effect of these materials on EFL listening instructions.

The findings from the review revealed that exposure to authentic listening materials leads to superior performance in listening comprehension (Mallaqiang, 2014; Ahmadi, 2016; Sabet & Mahsefat, 2012). Many studies found that authentic listening materials played an important role in the development of listening strategies (Wulandari et al., 2025; Saida, 2013; Ortage & Contreras, 2021). The studies also highlighted that the use of authentic listening materials significantly boosts student motivation and interest in learning (Lembarek, 2024; Kristiana, 2018). To create a more relevant and enjoyable learning experience, it is important to engage with content that reflects real-life scenarios (Putri et al., 2018). Additionally, Alamri (2025) and Gunde et al. (2017) emphasized the role of these materials to provide cultural insights. This cultural context enriches the learning experience and helps students navigate social interactions in English-speaking environments. Ghaderpanahi (2012) and Zhafarghandi et al. (2014) mentioned that authentic materials immerse students in the natural use of language as it occurs in everyday situations. This exposure helps learners make connections between classroom learning and real-life applications. Consequently, students become more adept at understanding the nuances and context of language.

Enhancing vocabulary and structure were found to be one of the effects of using authentic materials (Mousavi & Irvani, 2012; Rodngam & Somphong, 2016). Furthermore, some studies explained that the effect of authentic listening materials could expand to include academic success (Abebe et al., 2022; Mousavi & Irvani, 2012), critical listening skills (Saida, 2013) and curiosity and resourcefulness (Husnawati et al., 2024). For selecting criteria, the level of the student was agreed to be important in the selection (Kochkorova, 2025; Alamri, 2015; Zhafarghandi et al., 2014; Saida, 2013). In addition, criteria such as students' needs (Alamri, 2015; Tiven & Nikijuluw, 2025), along with the percentage of new vocabulary, the course objectives, the length of the text, the complexity of grammatical structures, and the type of text (Zhafarghandi et al., 2014) were also emphasized. Tiven & Nikijuluw (2025) mentioned that the availability of transcripts or subtitles, recommendations from other students, and the degree of difficulty could be included specifically when the students select their materials.

The systematic review paper has several limitations. Firstly, the literature scope is limited to studies published between 2010 and 2025, potentially overlooking earlier relevant research that could offer additional insights. Moreover, the reliability of the results may be affected because the included studies differ in methodological rigor, sample sizes, and contexts. This limitation raises concerns about whether the findings can be broadly applied across different EFL contexts and learner populations. Additionally, the main emphasis is mostly on listening comprehension, which may ignore the potential advantages of authentic materials for other key language skills. The results of the systematic review have significant implications for EFL teachers and curriculum developers, indicating that integrating authentic listening materials can enhance students' listening comprehension and overall engagement. The purpose of this letter is to encourage educational institutions to revise their curricula to include authentic resources reflecting language use in real-life situations, which in turn will facilitate a more meaningful and enjoyable learning experience for students. Additionally, the findings emphasize the need for professional development programs that equip teachers with effective strategies for using these materials in the classroom. Future research should aim to expand the scope of study by analyzing EFL learning contexts from multiple perspectives and examining the effect of authentic materials on other language skills in addition to listening comprehension. Using mixed methods and focusing on student interaction and motivation will provide a deeper understanding of the learning experience. Furthermore, investigating the criteria for selecting authentic materials can offer valuable insights that guide best practices in teaching English as a foreign language.

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Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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