

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The concluding chapter, first of all, provides the major findings drawn from the previous data analyses as an interpretation of the research questions and hypothesis listed in chapter one. In the second section, the pedagogical implications for selecting authentic listening materials, teaching listening comprehension and designing listening tests are presented, followed by the limitations in the present study and some suggestions for those interested in conducting related investigations in the future.

5.1 Findings

The major findings are summarized in terms of four dimensions.

First of all, the supplementary materials, integrating students' life experiences, interest and practicability, are appropriate supplementary materials for teaching EFL senior high school students' listening comprehension (see Figure 4.1). However, from the results of statistics (see Table 4.2), these materials are more suitable for high-proficiency level students than for middle- or low-proficiency level students. Obviously, the results for middle- or low-achievers are not of much relevance and significance in the present study. On the other hand, the high-achievers, after the ten-week authentic listening training, have almost a significant difference on the GEPT posttest performance (also see Table 4.2) because the authentic materials are quite challenging and could not only elevate their competency for vocabulary but also their skills in listening comprehension.

Second, observed from the subjects' questionnaires (see Appendix B), the problems the subjects encounter in the authentic broadcast materials are fast speed, linkage in speech, vocabulary, pitch and intonation, accent and other factors, such as quality of sound. Among them, as several researchers have indicated (Huang, 1991; Fan, 1993; Ou, 1996; Chien, 1999; Hsiung, 2002), the most difficult are speed and linkage, which are very common listening problems among non-native speakers when listening to natural speech.

Third, the listening materials adopted in the present investigation spark students' interest in listening to authentic broadcast (see Figure 4.3). Moreover, among the materials related to students' life, apart from weather report, students' performances on topics about singers and movie stars are higher than those on other topics (see Table 4-3).

Fourth, the statistical results of task types show that the design of test questions have no significant effects on high-proficiency and low-proficiency subjects' listening performance (see Table 4-11). However, from students' responses in the questionnaire, it is worthy to note that high achievers think that cloze tests give them a sense of achievements, better understanding, and motivation for their concentration. On the other hand, middle and low achievers can understand and concentrate on the given texts better and hence build up a sense of achievements with the task type of multiple choices.

5.2 Pedagogical Implications

The present study probes into applying authentic broadcast materials to supplement EFL senior high school students in listening comprehension. Through closely monitoring the radio station ICRT, the researcher manages to choose suitable materials which are closely related to students' experience in order to motivate their interest and train them to acquire self-autonomy in English learning. The results and findings obtained from the earlier statistics and students' responses to the questionnaires not only provide feedback to the researcher but also elicit important implications for English teaching.

5.2.1 Guidelines for Selecting Supplementary Listening Materials

First of all, before the selection of suitable supplementary listening materials, teachers should have a clear conception of students' learning background, interests, and competency of the language in order to cater best to the needs of the students.

Secondly, when choosing authentic broadcast materials, teachers should integrate students' life experiences and interests into the materials with a diverged practicability not only in their daily life but also their current English learned, to supplement the inadequacy of their current textbooks.

Thirdly, the selecting of materials should be up-to-date for students to have a sense of reality and to keep up with the times. This will in turn meet the communicative needs of learning English since English has become an international language.

Last but not least, the selection of excerpts should not be too long both in text and time for students to concentrate. It is suggested that an excerpt of about forty seconds in length be most suitable.

5.2.2 Guidelines for Authentic Listening Comprehension Instructional Techniques and Test Questions Design

The following are some guidelines for teachers who are also interested in adopting similar authentic broadcast materials as listening comprehension supplements.

Beginning from the Simplest

Most students will probably be so shocked that during their first exposure to the authentic broadcast materials due to its fast speed that they eventually evade listening to this kind of material. Thus, in the initial stage of training students, teachers should ask students to listen to what they are required to listen to only, not the whole sentences of passages. Since numbers are the easiest for almost every student to catch, for example, when listening to weather report, students should focus only on temperature. As for commercials, they should pay attention only to dates, days of the week and telephone numbers.

As far as vocabulary and sentence patterns are concerned, in order to establish confidence among learners, the materials or test goals should be confined to the basic 1,000 vocabulary words and sentence patterns taught in junior high school as a basis for communication. Hence, it is recommended that teachers gradually increase the amount of vocabulary as students make progress.

By so doing, this will not only strengthen students' confidence but also expose them to authentic listening environment. In addition, with regard to students' performance, teachers should gradually require students to listen to more detailed information of each text and understand the gist of the material.

Differentiating the Features between English and Chinese

Since English is stress-timed while Chinese is syllable-timed, it is necessary for

students to have a discrete understanding of both Chinese and English language features. Also in the initial stage, it is suggested teachers record both English and its corresponding Chinese translation broadcast by the same native English speakers and have it listened by students. This will help students to tell the difference between spoken Chinese and English with the guidance of the teacher.

Identifying Stream of Words from Spoken English

In the beginning, it is recommended that teachers let students listen to the texts once or twice before giving them the whole script. After that, students are requested to listen to and encircle important clusters or chunks in the passage simultaneously. In this way, students would be able to identify streams of utterances as a unit rather than word by word, which will in turn help students divide chunks of meaningful words within long utterances and accustom themselves to the fast speed of natural speech little by little.

Designing Diverged Types of Tasks

From the results of students' responses, the high-achievers prefer cloze test while the middle- and low-achievers prefer multiple choices. Despite the fact that there is still no unanimous conclusion of the effects of task types on listening comprehension, it is recommended that teachers provide diverged types of tests for students to familiarize themselves with kinds of listening tests.

5.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies

The present study has yielded fruitful results for implementation of authentic listening comprehension. Yet, there might be some loopholes and limitations in the process of study, which needs further investigation.

First of all, the pool of the study is relatively small (only 41 subjects), and the time allotted is limited. Besides, the proficiency of the subjects in the present study is in the transitional period¹ from junior high school to senior high. It is suggested that further studies should investigate similar researches on juniors or even those with higher levels.

In addition, the researcher has mainly used materials from the radio station ICRT. Nevertheless, for those who are interested in doing similar studies, it is suggested that teachers make use of different broadcast stations to familiarize students with different accents and intonations of native speakers.

¹ As mentioned earlier, the subjects in the present study are senior school freshmen. The disparity of vocabulary between junior high school and senior high school is quite large: junior high graduates with a word bank of more or less 800 words, while senior high graduates with 7000 words.