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Beyond Literal Meaning: Developing EFL Learners' Pragmatic Listening Competence through Authentic Audio Materials

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Abstract

Listening comprehension in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning is often associated with understanding explicit information, while learners' ability to interpret speakers' intended meanings in authentic communicative contexts receives comparatively less attention. This study investigates the development of EFL learners' pragmatic listening competence through the use of authentic audio materials. Employing a quasi-experimental mixed-methods design, the study involves undergraduate EFL learners who are assigned to an experimental group receiving instruction through authentic audio materials and a control group receiving conventional listening instruction. The authentic materials include naturally occurring conversations, interviews, business-related interactions, and other context-rich spoken texts designed to expose learners to indirect meanings, speech acts, politeness strategies, implicatures, and contextual cues. Data are collected through a pragmatic listening comprehension test, a learner perception questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data are analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including paired-samples and independent-samples tests, while qualitative data are analyzed thematically. The study is expected to demonstrate that exposure to authentic audio materials can significantly enhance learners' ability to interpret speaker intentions and implied meanings beyond literal comprehension. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of pragmatic-oriented listening pedagogy and provide empirical evidence for integrating authentic spoken materials into EFL listening instruction.

Keywords: Pragmatic Listening Competence, Authentic Audio Materials, Efl Learners, Listening Comprehension, Pragmatic Competence

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I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

Listening comprehension constitutes a fundamental component of second and foreign language learning because it provides learners with access to spoken language and supports meaningful communication. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, listening is often regarded as one of the most challenging language skills because learners are required to process spoken language in real time while simultaneously attending to vocabulary, pronunciation, grammatical structures, discourse organization, and contextual information. Unlike written language, spoken language is transient and frequently characterized by reduced forms, hesitation, repetition, different speech rates, accents, intonation patterns, and incomplete utterances. Consequently, successful listening comprehension involves more than recognizing individual words and identifying explicitly stated information. It requires learners to construct meaning by integrating linguistic input with contextual, cognitive, social, and pragmatic information (Field, 2008; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).

The importance of contextual interpretation becomes particularly evident when speakers communicate meanings that are not directly expressed through the literal interpretation of their utterances. In everyday communication, speakers frequently use indirect language to perform communicative acts. For example, the utterance *"It is a little cold in here"* may function not merely as a statement about temperature but as an indirect request to close a window. Similarly, *"Could you send me the report today?"* may function primarily as a polite request rather than a question about the listener's physical ability to send a report. Therefore, listeners need to move beyond decoding linguistic forms and infer what the speaker actually intends to communicate. This ability is closely related to pragmatic competence, particularly the receptive dimension of pragmatic competence or pragmatic comprehension.

Pragmatic competence concerns the ability to interpret and use language appropriately in relation to context, communicative intention, and social relationships. In second-language research, pragmatic comprehension has been examined as learners' ability to understand meanings that are not directly expressed in the linguistic form of an utterance. Taguchi (2007), for example, demonstrated that L2 learners can develop both the accuracy and processing speed of pragmatic comprehension, particularly in interpreting indirect speech acts. Her findings indicate that pragmatic comprehension is not simply a by-product of general language knowledge but represents an important dimension of second-language communicative ability. Similarly, Taguchi (2008a) found that learners' comprehension of conversational implicatures was related to listening ability, lexical access, and working memory, suggesting that pragmatic interpretation during listening involves the interaction of linguistic and cognitive processes.

Pragmatic comprehension is therefore particularly relevant to listening because listeners must often infer a speaker's intended meaning from a combination of linguistic and contextual cues. Taguchi (2008a) demonstrated that understanding conversational implicatures requires learners to process meanings that extend beyond the literal interpretation of an utterance. A learner may understand every individual word in a conversation but still fail to understand what the speaker actually means. This distinction is particularly important in EFL contexts, where learners may have sufficient grammatical knowledge but limited exposure to naturally occurring English interactions. Xiao (2015) further noted that L2 proficiency is associated with pragmatic competence, although higher general proficiency does not automatically guarantee successful pragmatic interpretation. Pragmatic comprehension is also influenced by contextual and sociopragmatic factors.

The problem becomes more complex when pragmatic meaning is conveyed through spoken discourse. Listeners need to attend not only to lexical and grammatical information but also to intonation, stress, pauses, discourse markers, speaker relationships, and situational context. These features can influence how an utterance is interpreted. For example, the utterance “*That's interesting*” may express genuine appreciation, mild disagreement, skepticism, or an attempt to avoid direct disagreement depending on the context and intonation. Consequently, pragmatic listening competence requires learners to integrate auditory and contextual information to infer the speaker's communicative intention.

Research on pragmatic comprehension provides evidence that learners may experience difficulties in interpreting implied meanings. Taguchi (2008b), for instance, compared the development of pragmatic comprehension in EFL and ESL learning environments and highlighted the importance of the learning environment and exposure to language use. Such findings suggest that classroom instruction should provide learners with opportunities to encounter language as it is used in authentic communicative situations rather than relying exclusively on decontextualized linguistic forms.

One pedagogical approach that may provide such opportunities is the use of authentic audio materials. Authentic materials are generally understood as language materials originally produced for purposes other than language teaching. In listening instruction, authentic audio materials may include interviews, podcasts, radio programs, workplace conversations, telephone interactions, meetings, news reports, and naturally occurring conversations. Such materials can expose learners to features of spoken English that are often simplified or absent in pedagogically constructed textbook dialogues, including natural speech rate, hesitation, repetition, discourse markers, reductions, accents, and context-dependent expressions.

The pedagogical value of authentic audio materials has been documented in EFL listening research. Ghaderpanahi (2012), for example, investigated the use of authentic aural materials with undergraduate EFL learners and reported statistically significant improvement in students'

listening ability following instruction using authentic materials. Similarly, Koliaei and Fatemipour found that EFL learners exposed to authentic audio materials demonstrated improvement in listening comprehension, providing further evidence that authentic spoken input can support listening development.

Evidence from the Indonesian context also indicates the pedagogical potential of authentic materials. Azizah (2016) examined the use of authentic materials with English Department students in Indonesia and found that the experimental group achieved a higher mean post-test score than the control group. The study also examined students' perceptions of authentic materials and found positive responses toward their use in listening instruction. Refai (2018) similarly reported that Indonesian EFL students perceived authentic listening materials as useful for connecting classroom listening activities with real-life language, culture, and social contexts. More recent Indonesian research continues to examine authentic materials as a means of enhancing listening comprehension, including quasi-experimental research in which students receiving authentic materials were compared with students receiving conventional instruction.

Although these studies provide strong evidence for the value of authentic materials in listening instruction, their primary focus has generally been **general listening comprehension**. Learners are commonly assessed on their ability to identify main ideas, specific information, details, or overall comprehension. This focus leaves an important dimension of listening relatively underexplored: the ability to interpret **what speakers mean beyond what they literally say**. A learner may correctly identify the topic of a conversation and recall specific information while still misunderstanding an indirect request, implied criticism, polite refusal, or sarcastic comment.

This distinction establishes an important conceptual gap between conventional listening comprehension and pragmatic listening competence. Conventional listening instruction often emphasizes comprehension of propositional or explicit content, whereas pragmatic listening requires learners to infer speaker intention and contextually appropriate meaning. Research on pragmatic comprehension has demonstrated the importance of listening and

contextual processing in interpreting implied meaning (Taguchi, 2007, 2008a), while research on authentic materials has demonstrated their effectiveness in improving general listening comprehension (Azizah, 2016; Ghaderpanahi, 2012; Koliaei & Fatemipour). However, these two research traditions have not been sufficiently integrated into a pedagogical intervention specifically designed to develop learners' ability to interpret pragmatic meaning through authentic spoken input.

The present study therefore addresses an **integration gap** between authentic listening pedagogy and pragmatic comprehension research. Rather than treating authentic audio merely as a source of more realistic listening input, this study conceptualizes authentic audio as a pedagogical resource through which learners can systematically develop their ability to identify speaker intentions, interpret implied meanings, recognize speech acts, understand indirectness and politeness, and use contextual cues to construct meaning.

This gap is particularly relevant in Indonesian higher education. EFL learners in Indonesian universities may have extensive experience with English vocabulary and grammatical structures but comparatively limited exposure to naturally occurring spoken interaction. Recent Indonesian research continues to demonstrate the usefulness of authentic materials for listening development, but the outcomes are still predominantly framed in terms of general listening comprehension. Consequently, there is a need to investigate whether authentic audio can contribute not only to understanding *what is said* but also to understanding *what is meant*.

1.2 Formulation of the Problem

The central problem addressed in this study is the potential discrepancy between EFL learners' ability to understand the literal content of spoken English and their ability to interpret the speaker's intended pragmatic meaning. Conventional listening instruction may enable learners to identify main ideas, specific information, and factual details, but learners may still encounter difficulties when meaning is expressed indirectly or depends heavily on contextual and interpersonal information. This problem is particularly important because authentic communication frequently requires

listeners to infer meanings that are not explicitly stated. Requests, refusals, disagreement, criticism, apologies, suggestions, and expressions of politeness may be communicated indirectly. Therefore, successful listening requires learners to integrate linguistic, contextual, and pragmatic cues rather than relying exclusively on literal interpretation.

Based on this problem, the present study asks whether systematic exposure to authentic audio materials can facilitate the development of EFL learners' pragmatic listening competence. The study further considers which dimensions of pragmatic listening competence are most responsive to the instructional intervention and how learners perceive the use of authentic audio materials in developing their ability to interpret implied and context-dependent meanings.

1.3 Urgency of the Research

The urgency of this research lies in the increasing need to prepare EFL learners for authentic communication in academic, social, and professional contexts. Effective communication requires more than grammatical accuracy and vocabulary knowledge. Learners must be able to interpret communicative intentions, recognize indirect meanings, and respond appropriately to context. Failure to understand these meanings may result in misunderstanding even when the learner has adequate linguistic knowledge.

From a pedagogical perspective, pragmatic listening competence represents an important bridge between classroom-based language knowledge and real-world communication. Authentic audio materials provide learners with opportunities to encounter naturally occurring speech and the contextual cues necessary for interpreting pragmatic meaning. Previous research has established that authentic materials can improve general listening comprehension (Ghaderpanahi, 2012; Azizah, 2016; Koliaei & Fatemipour), while pragmatic research has demonstrated that learners' ability to interpret implied meaning can be developed through appropriate exposure and instruction (Taguchi, 2007, 2008a, 2008b). The next step is therefore to investigate the intersection of these two areas.

The urgency is also connected to the professional needs of university students. For

students in English Language Education programs, pragmatic competence is important because they will eventually participate in academic, professional, and interpersonal communication in English. Teachers who understand only the literal meaning of spoken language may have difficulty explaining why an utterance functions differently depending on context, speaker relationship, or communicative purpose. Developing pragmatic listening competence can therefore contribute not only to students' own communicative ability but also to their future pedagogical competence.

The study also has methodological significance. By operationalizing pragmatic listening competence through specific dimensions such as speaker intention, implied meaning, speech acts, politeness and indirectness, and contextual interpretation, the study moves beyond conventional listening tests that primarily measure factual comprehension. Such an approach can provide a more comprehensive understanding of what it means to comprehend authentic spoken English.

1.4 Purpose of the Research

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of authentic audio materials in developing EFL learners' pragmatic listening competence. Specifically, the study aims to determine whether systematic exposure to authentic spoken English can improve learners' ability to interpret meanings beyond literal comprehension.

More specifically, the study aims to:

1. examine whether the use of authentic audio materials significantly improves EFL learners' pragmatic listening competence;
2. identify which dimensions of pragmatic listening competence demonstrate the greatest improvement following the instructional intervention; and
3. explore EFL learners' perceptions of the use of authentic audio materials for developing pragmatic listening competence.

The study is expected to contribute to both theory and practice. Theoretically, it seeks to strengthen the conceptualization of pragmatic listening competence as an important dimension of EFL listening development. Pedagogically, it seeks to provide empirical evidence concerning the use of authentic audio materials not simply as supplementary listening resources but as systematically designed input for developing learners' ability to interpret speaker intention, implied meaning, speech acts, politeness, and contextual meaning.

Ultimately, the study seeks to move EFL listening instruction **beyond literal meaning**. Instead of asking learners only "*What did the speaker say?*", pragmatic listening instruction encourages learners to ask "*What did the speaker mean?*" and "*How does the context influence that meaning?*" This shift is expected to support a more comprehensive and communicatively oriented approach to listening instruction in Indonesian higher education.

II RESEARCH METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a **quasi-experimental mixed-methods design** to investigate the effectiveness of authentic audio materials in developing EFL learners' pragmatic listening competence. A quasi-experimental approach was selected because the participants were members of intact classes and could not be randomly assigned individually to experimental and control groups. The quantitative component was used to examine changes in learners' pragmatic listening competence before and after the intervention, while the qualitative component was used to

explore learners' perceptions of and experiences with authentic audio materials during the learning process.

The quantitative component employed a **pretest-posttest control group design**. Two comparable classes were selected, with one class assigned as the experimental group and the other as the control group. The experimental group received listening instruction using authentic audio materials with explicit attention to pragmatic interpretation, whereas the control group received conventional listening instruction using the regular instructional materials and activities.

The design can be represented as follows:

Group	Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
Experimental	O ₁	X	O ₂
Control	O ₃	C	O ₄

Where:

- **O₁** = experimental group's pre-test;
- **O₂** = experimental group's post-test;
- **O₃** = control group's pre-test;
- **O₄** = control group's post-test;
- **X** = authentic-audio-based pragmatic listening instruction;
- **C** = conventional listening instruction.

The qualitative component consisted of a learner perception questionnaire and semi-structured interviews conducted after the intervention. The qualitative data were used to complement the quantitative findings and provide a deeper explanation of learners' experiences with authentic audio materials.

2.2 Research Participants

The participants were undergraduate students enrolled in a Listening Comprehension course in an English Language Education Study Program at a university in Indonesia. The participants were selected because the course provides an appropriate instructional context for developing listening comprehension while allowing pragmatic interpretation to be incorporated into the learning activities.

Approximately **50–60 students** from two intact classes participated in the study. One class was assigned to the experimental group and the other to the control group. Each group consisted of approximately 25–30 students.

The participants were at a comparable level of English proficiency based on their previous academic performance and/or institutional placement information. Before the intervention, both groups completed the same pragmatic listening pre-test to determine their initial level of competence and to examine whether the groups were comparable before treatment.

Participation in the study was voluntary. The students were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study, and their responses were treated confidentially. Participation or non-participation in the research did not affect students' academic grades.

2.3 Sampling Technique

The study employed **purposive cluster sampling**. Two intact classes were selected based on several criteria: (1) the students were enrolled in the same Listening Comprehension course; (2) the classes were taught at a comparable academic level; (3) the students had a similar range of English proficiency; and (4) both classes followed comparable course schedules and learning objectives.

One class was designated as the experimental group and the other as the control group. The use of intact classes was considered appropriate because rearranging students into randomly assigned groups was not administratively feasible within the existing university course structure.

To minimize selection bias, the researcher compared the pre-test scores of the two groups before conducting the intervention.

2.4 Research Variables

The study involved one independent variable and one primary dependent variable.

The **independent variable** was the use of **authentic audio materials** in pragmatic-oriented listening instruction. Authentic audio materials were defined as spoken English materials originally produced for communicative purposes rather than specifically for language teaching. These materials included interviews, podcasts, workplace conversations, telephone conversations, business interactions, and other naturally occurring or minimally adapted spoken texts.

The **dependent variable** was **pragmatic listening competence**, defined in this study as learners' ability to interpret speaker meaning beyond the literal content of an utterance by integrating linguistic, contextual, and pragmatic cues.

Pragmatic listening competence was operationalized through five dimensions:

1. **Speaker intention** – the ability to identify what the speaker intends to accomplish through an utterance;
2. **Implied meaning** – the ability to infer meanings that are not explicitly stated;
3. **Speech act recognition** – the ability to recognize communicative functions such as requests, refusals, apologies, suggestions, and complaints;

4. **Politeness and indirectness** – the ability to interpret the degree and function of politeness and indirect expressions; and
5. **Contextual interpretation** – the ability to use situational, interpersonal, and discourse context to interpret spoken meaning.

Learner perception was treated as a supporting qualitative variable rather than as the primary outcome variable.

2.5 Authentic Audio Materials

The experimental treatment consisted of authentic and contextually rich audio materials selected according to the objectives of pragmatic listening instruction. The materials were selected based on five criteria: (1) authenticity of language use, (2) relevance to learners' communicative needs, (3) presence of identifiable pragmatic features, (4) appropriate linguistic complexity, and (5) sufficient contextual information to enable pragmatic interpretation.

The audio materials included short conversations, interviews, workplace interactions, telephone conversations, customer-service encounters, business meetings, and podcast excerpts. Materials were selected to expose students to a variety of pragmatic functions, including requests, refusals, apologies, suggestions, disagreement, agreement, complaints, indirect expressions, politeness, and conversational implicatures.

Where necessary, audio materials were minimally edited for technical quality, length, and instructional suitability. However, the original linguistic and pragmatic features of the spoken texts were retained as much as possible.

The treatment was implemented over **eight instructional meetings**, excluding the pre-test and post-test sessions.

The instructional sequence was organized as follows:

Meeting Audio Context		Pragmatic Focus
1	Everyday conversation	Speaker intention
2	Telephone conversation	Requests and politeness
3	Job interview	Indirect responses
4	Workplace conversation	Agreement and disagreement

Meeting Audio Context		Pragmatic Focus
5	Customer-service interaction	Complaints and apologies
6	Business negotiation	Suggestions and persuasion
7	Interview/podcast	Conversational implicature
8	Professional conversation	Integrated pragmatic interpretation

2.6 Instructional Procedure

The experimental group received a structured pragmatic listening procedure consisting of three stages: **pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening**.

2.6.1 Pre-listening Stage

The pre-listening stage was designed to activate learners' background knowledge and establish the context of the audio.

The teacher introduced the situation, participants, communicative setting, and relevant vocabulary. Students were also presented with questions designed to encourage them to predict possible speaker intentions.

For example, before listening to a business telephone conversation, students might be asked:

- Who are the speakers?
- What is the relationship between them?
- What might the purpose of the conversation be?
- How might a speaker make a request politely?

This stage was intended to prepare students to attend to contextual and pragmatic information rather than merely individual words.

2.6.2 While-listening Stage

During the while-listening stage, students listened to the authentic audio two or three times. The first listening focused on general understanding and identification of the communicative situation.

During the second listening, students focused on specific pragmatic features, including:

- speaker intention;
- implied meaning;
- speech acts;
- politeness;
- indirect expressions;
- intonation and contextual clues.

Students were asked to answer questions requiring interpretation rather than simple recall.

For example:

"Would you mind sending the revised document before lunch?"

Students were asked to identify the communicative function of the utterance and explain why the speaker used an indirect form rather than a direct command.

2.6.3 Post-listening Stage

The post-listening stage focused on interpretation, discussion, and reflection.

Students discussed their answers in pairs or small groups and justified their interpretations using evidence from the audio. The teacher then provided explicit explanations of the relevant pragmatic features.

Students were encouraged to compare:

1. the literal meaning of an utterance;
2. the speaker's intended meaning; and
3. the contextual evidence supporting the interpretation.

This procedure was intended to help students consciously recognize the difference between **what is said** and **what is meant**.

2.7 Control Group Treatment

The control group received conventional listening instruction based on the regular course materials and teaching procedures. The instructional activities focused primarily on conventional listening comprehension, including identifying main ideas, specific information, vocabulary, details, and factual information.

The control group received the same amount of instructional time as the experimental group. However, the systematic explicit focus on pragmatic interpretation and authentic audio materials was not incorporated into the control treatment.

This procedure was intended to ensure that differences in post-test performance could be more reasonably attributed to the intervention rather than differences in instructional time.

2.8 Research Instruments

Three instruments were used to collect the data: a pragmatic listening comprehension test, a learner perception questionnaire, and a semi-structured interview.

2.8.1 Pragmatic Listening Comprehension Test

The primary instrument was a **Pragmatic Listening Competence Test (PLCT)** developed by the researcher based on the theoretical dimensions of pragmatic comprehension and listening.

The test consisted of approximately **30 items** covering five dimensions:

Dimension	Number of Items
Speaker intention	6
Implied meaning	6
Speech acts	6
Politeness and indirectness	6
Contextual interpretation	6
Total	30

Each item consisted of a short authentic or authentically constructed audio segment followed by a comprehension question.

For example:

Audio: *"I was wondering if you could send me the updated proposal before the meeting."*

Question:

What does the speaker intend to do?

- A. Ask about the listener's ability
- B. Make a polite request
- C. Offer assistance
- D. Give information

The correct answer is **B**.

The test was administered as a pre-test and post-test. Parallel forms were used where possible to reduce the possibility of test familiarity influencing post-test performance.

The total score was converted to a scale of 0–100 using the following formula:

$$\text{Score} = (\text{Number of Correct Answers} / \text{Total Items}) \times 100$$

2.8.2 Learner Perception Questionnaire

A questionnaire was administered to the experimental group after the intervention to examine students' perceptions of authentic audio materials.

The questionnaire consisted of approximately **20 statements** using a five-point Likert scale:

- | | | |
|---|---|-------------------|
| 1 | = | Strongly Disagree |
| 2 | = | Disagree |
| 3 | = | Neutral |
| 4 | = | Agree |
| 5 | = | Strongly Agree |

The questionnaire addressed four dimensions:

Dimension	Focus
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Dimension	Focus
Authenticity	Realism and relevance of audio
Pragmatic awareness	Awareness of implied meaning and speaker intention
Learning engagement	Interest and involvement
Perceived usefulness	Contribution to listening development

Examples of questionnaire statements included:

- Authentic audio materials help me understand what speakers really mean.
- I can identify indirect requests more easily after the lessons.
- Intonation helps me understand the speaker's intention.
- Authentic conversations expose me to English used in real situations.
- I feel more confident interpreting implied meanings in English conversations.

2.8.3 Semi-Structured Interview

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with approximately **8–10 students** from the experimental group.

Participants were selected to represent different levels of improvement based on their pre-test and post-test scores.

The interviews explored students' experiences with authentic audio materials, the challenges they encountered, and their perceptions of pragmatic interpretation.

Sample questions included:

1. What was the most difficult aspect of understanding the authentic audio?
2. How did you determine what the speaker really meant?
3. Which pragmatic expressions were difficult for you to understand?
4. Did intonation or context help you interpret the speaker's intention?
5. How did authentic audio differ from the listening materials you normally use?
6. Do you think authentic audio materials helped improve your listening ability? Why?

The interviews were conducted in Indonesian or English according to participants' preference and were subsequently transcribed for analysis.

2.9 Validity of the Instruments

Before the main data collection, the Pragmatic Listening Competence Test was subjected to **expert judgment** to establish content validity. Two or three experts in English language teaching, applied linguistics, or pragmatics were invited to review the instrument.

The experts evaluated the items in terms of:

- relevance to pragmatic listening competence;
- clarity of the questions;
- appropriateness of the audio;
- correspondence between the audio and the intended pragmatic feature;
- suitability for the participants' proficiency level; and
- absence of ambiguity in the answer options.

Items that were considered unclear or insufficiently representative were revised or removed.

A pilot test was subsequently conducted with students who were not included in the main sample. The pilot test was used to examine item difficulty, discrimination, and reliability.

2.10 Reliability of the Instrument

The internal consistency of the pragmatic listening test was examined using **Cronbach's alpha**. A reliability coefficient of approximately **0.70 or higher** was considered acceptable for the research instrument.

For the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha was also calculated to determine the internal consistency of the perception scale.

In addition to internal consistency, item-level analysis was conducted for the listening test. Items with extremely low difficulty or poor discrimination were reviewed before the final administration.

2.11 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted in five stages.

Stage 1: Instrument Preparation

The researcher developed the pragmatic listening test, questionnaire, and interview protocol. The instruments were reviewed by experts and piloted before the main study.

Stage 2: Pre-test

Both groups completed the pragmatic listening pre-test before the intervention. The pre-test established participants' initial pragmatic listening competence.

Stage 3: Intervention

The experimental group received eight meetings of authentic-audio-based pragmatic listening instruction. The control group received conventional listening instruction during the same period.

Stage 4: Post-test

After completion of the intervention, both groups completed the post-test.

Stage 5: Questionnaire and Interview

The experimental group completed the perception questionnaire. Subsequently, 8–10 students participated in semi-structured interviews.

2.12 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

First, descriptive statistics were calculated, including:

- mean;
- standard deviation;
- minimum score; and
- maximum score.

Second, the normality of the data was examined using the **Shapiro–Wilk test**. Homogeneity of variance was examined using **Levene's test**.

To determine whether the groups differed significantly after the intervention, an **independent-samples t-test** was initially considered. However, because the study used a pre-test/post-test design, **Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA)** was preferred as the primary analysis when its assumptions were satisfied. Post-test pragmatic listening scores were treated as the dependent variable, group membership as the independent variable, and pre-test scores as the covariate.

ANCOVA was selected because it allows the researcher to compare post-test performance while statistically controlling for potential differences in participants' initial pragmatic listening competence.

Within-group improvement was also examined using a **paired-samples t-test**.

Effect size was calculated to determine the practical magnitude of the intervention. **Partial eta squared (η^2p)** was reported for ANCOVA, while **Cohen's d** was reported for pre-test/post-test changes where appropriate.

The statistical significance level was set at $p < .05$.

The quantitative analysis therefore addressed whether authentic audio materials produced a statistically significant improvement in pragmatic listening competence and whether the magnitude of the improvement was educationally meaningful.

2.13 Analysis of Learner Perceptions

Questionnaire responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The mean and standard deviation for each item and dimension were calculated.

The interpretation of the five-point Likert scale was organized as follows:

Mean Range Interpretation

1.00–1.80	Very Low
1.81–2.60	Low
2.61–3.40	Moderate
3.41–4.20	High
4.21–5.00	Very High

The results were used to identify learners' perceptions regarding the authenticity, usefulness, engagement, and contribution of the materials to pragmatic listening development.

2.14 Qualitative Data Analysis

Interview data were analyzed using **thematic analysis**. The analysis followed several stages: familiarization with the data, initial coding, identification of themes, review of themes, definition of themes, and interpretation.

The analysis focused on several areas:

1. learners' difficulties in interpreting pragmatic meaning;
2. the role of context in comprehension;
3. the role of intonation and other auditory cues;
4. learners' responses to authentic spoken English;
5. perceived benefits of authentic audio materials; and
6. challenges associated with authentic listening input.

The qualitative findings were then compared with the quantitative results to provide a more comprehensive interpretation of the intervention.

2.15 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were observed throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the purpose, procedures, and voluntary

nature of the study. They were informed that their participation would not influence their academic grades.

All questionnaire, test, and interview data were anonymized. Students' names were replaced with codes during data analysis and reporting. The data were used exclusively for research purposes and stored securely by the researcher.

2.16 Research Trustworthiness

Several procedures were implemented to strengthen the credibility of the findings. Content validity was established through expert judgment, while instrument reliability was examined statistically through pilot testing. The

use of both quantitative and qualitative data enabled methodological triangulation. Furthermore, the interview findings were compared with questionnaire responses and quantitative test results to identify convergent and divergent patterns.

Through this combination of experimental comparison, validated instruments, statistical analysis, and qualitative exploration, the study was designed to provide robust evidence concerning the role of authentic audio materials in developing EFL learners' pragmatic listening competence.

III RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

3.1.1 Participants' Pragmatic Listening Performance

The study involved 40 undergraduate EFL learners enrolled in a Listening Comprehension course. The participants were divided into two groups consisting of 20 students in the experimental group and 20 students in the control group. The experimental group received listening instruction using authentic audio materials with an explicit focus on pragmatic interpretation, while the control group received conventional listening instruction.

Both groups completed a pragmatic listening pre-test before the instructional intervention and a post-test after the intervention. The descriptive results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Pre-test and Post-test Scores of the Experimental and Control Groups

Group	N	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Mean Gain
Experimental	20	77	90	13
Control	20	75	85	10

As shown in Table 1, the experimental group obtained a mean pre-test score of 77, while the control group obtained a mean pre-test score of 75. The relatively similar pre-test scores indicate that the two groups started the intervention with broadly comparable levels of pragmatic listening performance.

After the instructional intervention, the experimental group achieved a mean post-test score of 90, representing an improvement of 13

points from the pre-test. Meanwhile, the control group increased from a mean pre-test score of 75 to a mean post-test score of 85, representing an improvement of 10 points.

Although both groups demonstrated improvement, the experimental group showed a **greater mean gain** than the control group. The difference in gain scores was **3 points**, with the experimental group demonstrating a 13-point increase compared with a 10-point increase in the control group.

The descriptive findings provide an initial indication that instruction using authentic audio materials may have contributed to greater development of learners' pragmatic listening competence. However, inferential statistical testing is required to determine whether the observed difference between the two groups is statistically significant.

3.1.2 Percentage of Improvement

To provide an additional descriptive interpretation, the percentage of improvement from pre-test to post-test was calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Percentage of improvement} = ((\text{Post-test} - \text{Pre-test}) / \text{Pre-test}) \times 100$$

For the experimental group:

$$((90 - 77) / 77) \times 100 = 16.88\%$$

For the control group:

$$((85 - 75) / 75) \times 100 = 13.33\%$$

Table 2. Percentage of Improvement

Group	Pre-test	Post-test	Gain	Percentage of Improvement
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Group	Pre-test	Post-test	Gain	Percentage of Improvement
Experimental	77	90	13	16.88%
Control	75	85	10	13.33%

The experimental group demonstrated a **16.88% improvement**, whereas the control group demonstrated a **13.33% improvement**. Thus, descriptively, the improvement in the experimental group was approximately **3.55 percentage points greater** than the improvement observed in the control group.

These results suggest that the authentic-audio intervention may have provided additional benefits beyond those obtained through conventional listening instruction.

3.1.3 Interpretation of the Improvement

The increase from 77 to 90 in the experimental group is particularly noteworthy because the intervention was designed not merely to improve learners' ability to identify explicit information but to develop their ability to interpret meaning beyond the literal content of spoken utterances.

During the intervention, students were exposed to authentic conversations and context-rich spoken materials containing requests, indirect expressions, disagreements, politeness strategies, implied meanings, and other pragmatic features. The instructional activities encouraged students to consider the relationship between what speakers said and what they intended to communicate.

For example, learners were encouraged to distinguish between the literal interpretation of an utterance and its communicative function. An utterance such as *"Would you mind sending me the report?"* was not treated simply as a question about the listener's willingness or ability. Instead, students were guided to recognize the utterance as a polite request.

The increase in the experimental group's mean score therefore provides descriptive evidence that the instructional approach was associated with improvement in learners' ability to interpret context-dependent spoken meaning.

4. Discussion

4.1 The Effectiveness of Authentic Audio Materials

The descriptive findings indicate that both groups improved in pragmatic listening

competence. However, the experimental group demonstrated a higher mean gain than the control group, increasing by 13 points compared with 10 points.

The greater improvement observed in the experimental group is consistent with previous research emphasizing the pedagogical value of authentic materials in EFL listening instruction. Azizah (2016), for example, found that Indonesian EFL learners exposed to authentic listening materials demonstrated better post-test performance than learners receiving conventional instruction. Similarly, Ghaderpanahi (2012) reported positive effects of authentic aural materials on EFL learners' listening comprehension.

The current study extends these findings by shifting the focus from general listening comprehension to **pragmatic listening competence**. Rather than focusing exclusively on learners' ability to identify explicit information, the present intervention exposed students to situations in which meaning depended on context, speaker intention, indirectness, politeness, and other pragmatic features.

The experimental group's increase from 77 to 90 suggests that authentic audio materials may provide learners with meaningful opportunities to practice interpreting these features.

4.2 Development beyond Literal Comprehension

The central argument of the present study is that listening comprehension should not be understood solely as the ability to recognize words and retrieve explicit information. Effective listening also requires learners to infer what speakers intend to communicate.

This perspective is consistent with Taguchi's (2007) research on pragmatic comprehension, which demonstrated that L2 learners can develop their ability to interpret pragmatic meaning through appropriate learning experiences. Taguchi (2008a) further demonstrated the relationship between listening ability and the comprehension of conversational implicatures.

The present findings complement this research by providing a pedagogical context in which learners were repeatedly exposed to authentic spoken discourse and asked to interpret meaning beyond literal language.

The 13-point gain observed in the experimental group suggests that learners became better able to process spoken language in context. Nevertheless, because the current data are aggregate means, individual changes in specific pragmatic dimensions cannot yet be established.

4.3 Comparison with Conventional Listening Instruction

The control group also demonstrated meaningful improvement, increasing from a mean of 75 to 85. This finding is important because it indicates that conventional listening instruction itself contributed to learning.

However, the experimental group's gain was **3 points higher** than the control group's gain. This difference suggests a possible added value of incorporating authentic audio materials and explicit pragmatic interpretation activities into listening instruction.

The result should nevertheless be interpreted cautiously. A three-point difference in mean gain alone does not establish statistical significance. Individual-level scores are required to conduct inferential tests such as an independent-samples t-test, ANCOVA, or a non-parametric equivalent. Therefore, the present descriptive results support the direction of the proposed hypothesis but do not yet provide sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis.

4.4 Pedagogical Implications

The findings have several pedagogical implications for EFL listening instruction.

First, authentic audio materials can be used not merely to expose learners to natural spoken English but also to develop their pragmatic interpretation skills. Teachers can select audio containing indirect requests, refusals, disagreement, politeness, complaints, negotiations, and conversational implicatures.

Second, listening activities should encourage students to distinguish between **literal meaning** and **intended meaning**. This distinction is particularly important because students may understand the vocabulary and grammatical structure of an utterance but misunderstand its communicative function.

Third, teachers should explicitly draw learners' attention to contextual and prosodic information. Speaker relationships, situation, intonation,

stress, pauses, and discourse context may all contribute to pragmatic interpretation.

Fourth, the use of authentic materials can be particularly relevant to English for Specific Purposes and Business English. Business meetings, interviews, negotiations, customer-service conversations, and telephone interactions provide realistic contexts in which indirectness and politeness play important roles.

4.5 Implications for Pragmatic Listening Instruction

The results suggest that pragmatic listening competence can be incorporated systematically into listening courses.

Rather than organizing listening lessons exclusively around conventional comprehension objectives such as identifying the main idea and specific details, teachers can add questions such as:

- What does the speaker intend?
- Why does the speaker express the idea indirectly?
- What does the speaker imply?
- Is the speaker making a request, suggestion, complaint, or refusal?
- What contextual information helps you understand the speaker's meaning?
- How does the speaker's intonation influence the interpretation?

Such activities can help learners become more conscious of the distinction between linguistic form and communicative function.

The present study therefore supports a shift from a purely **bottom-up listening orientation** toward an approach that integrates linguistic processing with contextual and pragmatic interpretation.

4.6 Limitations of the Current Findings

Although the descriptive results are encouraging, several limitations should be acknowledged.

First, the sample consisted of only 40 students from two intact classes. Therefore, the findings should not be generalized to all Indonesian EFL learners without further research involving larger and more diverse samples.

Second, the current analysis is based on group mean scores. Standard deviations and individual student scores are necessary to determine the variability of learning gains and conduct inferential statistical analysis.

Third, the intervention focused on a limited period of instructional exposure. A longer intervention may provide a stronger indication of whether improvements in pragmatic listening competence are sustained over time.

Finally, pragmatic listening competence is multidimensional. The current aggregate scores do not show whether students improved equally in speaker intention, implied meaning, speech acts, politeness and indirectness, and contextual interpretation. Further item-level analysis is therefore recommended.

4.7 Overall Interpretation

Overall, the results demonstrate a positive descriptive pattern. The experimental group increased from **77 to 90**, while the control group increased from **75 to 85**. The experimental group's **13-point gain** was greater than the control group's **10-point gain**.

These findings provide preliminary support for the proposition that authentic audio materials,

when accompanied by explicit pragmatic listening activities, may facilitate the development of EFL learners' pragmatic listening competence.

Importantly, the findings reinforce the central premise of the study: successful listening involves more than understanding **what speakers say**. Learners also need to understand **what speakers mean** and how context influences that meaning.

However, before making a definitive claim regarding the effectiveness of the intervention, the individual scores of the 40 participants should be analyzed statistically. The next stage of analysis should therefore include the standard deviation, normality test, ANCOVA or independent-samples t-test, and effect size.

The final interpretation should be based on both statistical significance and practical significance rather than on mean differences alone.

IV CONCLUSION

The section consists of conclusions and suggestions for research findings.

5.1 Conclusion

This study examined the development of EFL learners' pragmatic listening competence through the use of authentic audio materials. The findings indicated a positive improvement in both the experimental and control groups. However, the experimental group demonstrated a greater improvement, with the mean score increasing from **77 in the pre-test to 90 in the post-test**, resulting in a **13-point gain**. Meanwhile, the control group's mean score increased from **75 to 85**, representing a **10-point gain**.

The greater improvement observed in the experimental group suggests that authentic audio materials can potentially contribute to the development of pragmatic listening competence. More specifically, authentic spoken materials provide learners with opportunities to encounter English as it is used in meaningful communicative contexts, including indirect expressions, requests, refusals, politeness, disagreement, implied meanings, and context-dependent utterances. Such exposure may help

learners move beyond literal interpretation and develop greater awareness of speaker intention.

The findings also emphasize that pragmatic listening competence should be considered an important component of EFL listening instruction. Understanding spoken English involves more than identifying vocabulary, grammatical structures, and explicit information. Learners also need to interpret contextual, interpersonal, and prosodic cues in order to understand what speakers actually intend to communicate.

Nevertheless, the findings should be interpreted cautiously because the current results are based on descriptive mean scores. Further inferential analysis using individual student scores is necessary to determine the statistical significance and effect size of the observed differences between the two groups. Therefore, the present findings provide **preliminary empirical support** for the use of authentic audio materials in pragmatic listening instruction rather than definitive evidence of causal effectiveness.

Overall, the study reinforces the importance of moving **"beyond literal meaning"** in EFL listening instruction. Authentic audio materials,

when combined with explicit pragmatic-focused activities, offer a promising approach to helping learners understand not only **what speakers say but also what speakers mean**.

5.2 Suggestions

Based on the findings and limitations of the study, several suggestions are proposed.

6.1 Suggestions for EFL Lecturers

EFL lecturers are encouraged to integrate authentic audio materials into listening instruction, particularly materials that contain naturally occurring pragmatic features. Rather than focusing exclusively on main ideas and specific information, listening activities can include questions related to:

- speaker intention;
- implied meaning;
- speech acts;
- politeness and indirectness;
- contextual interpretation; and
- intonation and prosodic cues.

Lecturers should also explicitly guide students to distinguish between the **literal meaning** of an utterance and its **intended meaning**. This can help learners become more aware that the same linguistic expression may convey different meanings depending on context.

6.2 Suggestions for Material Development

Authentic audio materials should be selected systematically rather than simply based on their difficulty or popularity. Materials should represent a variety of communicative contexts, such as everyday conversations, academic discussions, job interviews, workplace interactions, business meetings, negotiations, telephone conversations, and customer-service encounters.

For Business English courses in particular, authentic audio from professional contexts can be used to develop learners' ability to interpret polite requests, disagreement, persuasion, negotiation strategies, indirect refusals, and other pragmatic functions frequently encountered in professional communication.

6.3 Suggestions for EFL Learners

Learners are encouraged to listen to authentic English outside the classroom through podcasts, interviews, radio programs, videos, and other spoken-English resources. However, learners should not focus only on understanding

individual words. They should also pay attention to:

Who is speaking?

To whom?

In what situation?

What does the speaker literally say?

What does the speaker actually mean?

What clues help me understand the intended meaning?

This type of reflective listening can help learners gradually develop pragmatic awareness and become more effective listeners in authentic communication.

6.4 Suggestions for Future Researchers

Future research should involve a **larger number of participants** from several universities or educational contexts to increase the generalizability of the findings. Researchers could also conduct a longer intervention to determine whether improvements in pragmatic listening competence are sustained over time.

Future studies should also examine pragmatic listening competence according to specific dimensions, such as **conversational implicature, indirect speech acts, politeness, sarcasm, disagreement, requests, refusals, and speaker intention**. Such analysis would provide a more detailed understanding of which aspects of pragmatic listening are most responsive to authentic audio-based instruction.

In addition, future studies are encouraged to employ **individual-level statistical analysis**, including ANCOVA, mixed-effects models, or other appropriate inferential techniques, and report effect sizes and confidence intervals. Qualitative data from interviews or think-aloud protocols could also be incorporated to examine how learners actually process pragmatic meaning while listening.

6.5 Suggestions for Further Research on Technology

Future researchers may also investigate the integration of **digital and AI-supported authentic audio materials** into pragmatic listening instruction. Adaptive listening platforms, AI-generated conversational simulations, speech-recognition technology, and interactive dialogue systems could provide learners with opportunities to practice interpreting pragmatic meaning in increasingly diverse communicative situations.

Such research could investigate whether technology-enhanced authentic listening can provide more personalized feedback and greater exposure to different accents, speech rates, interpersonal relationships, and pragmatic contexts.

Final Implication

The main implication of this study is that **listening instruction should not stop at**

comprehension of literal information. In authentic communication, learners must be able to interpret intentions, relationships, context, and implied meanings. Therefore, integrating authentic audio with explicit pragmatic instruction can potentially make EFL listening pedagogy more **contextual, communicative, and relevant to real-world English use.**

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