TRANSFORMATIONAL LANGUAGE, LITERATURE, AND TECHNOLOGY OVERVIEW IN LEARNING (TRANSTOOL)

THE IMPACT OF INTEGRATING AUTHENTIC MATERIALS ON LEARNER ENGAGEMENT AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Ahmad Faiz
Universitas Negeri Malang
E-mail: faizahmadum88@gmaill.com

Abstract

The use of authentic materials in language learning has been recognized to have a positive impact on students' engagement and language development. Authentic materials provide relevant and meaningful learning contexts, which can increase students' motivation and participation and help them develop better communicative and linguistic skills. This study aims to evaluate the impact of integrating authentic materials on learners' engagement and their language development, focusing on improving speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. This study used a quasi-experimental method involving 90 students from three randomly selected classes. The research was conducted by measuring students' language skills before and after the application of authentic materials for six weeks. Measurements were made through initial and final tests, with data analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results showed a significant improvement in students' language skills after the application of authentic materials. The average improvement in speaking was 23.8%, listening was 28.2%, reading was 24.4%, and writing was 15.5%. The findings indicate that the use of authentic materials can effectively increase students' engagement and their language skills in a more relevant and meaningful context. This research shows that integrating authentic materials in language learning not only improves language skills but also students' motivation and engagement, which is essential for more effective and meaningful language learning.

Keywords: *Authentic Materials, Learner Engagement, Language Development*

1. INTRODUCTION

The integration of authentic materials in language learning has the potential to positively impact student engagement and language development. This approach not only provides students with content that is relevant and relatable to real-life situations, but also fosters a deeper connection to the subject matter, ultimately increasing motivation and participation among students (Erbaggio et al., 2012). In addition, authentic materials help facilitate the development of communicative skills and linguistic knowledge by aligning learning activities with students' interests and backgrounds, thus promoting a more engaging and effective learning environment (Shuang, 2014). Moreover, the use of such materials encourages students to be more independent in their learning process, as they can engage with content that suits their experience and goals, leading to better results in language proficiency.

The incorporation of authentic materials can significantly reduce students' anxiety regarding language exposure, allowing them to actively participate in their learning process while adapting to the various language styles and contexts they encounter in their daily interactions (Erbaggio et al., 2012). This emphasis on authenticity not only enriches the learning experience but also underscores the need to connect the material to students'

prior knowledge and linguistic abilities, ensuring that students can confidently navigate the complexities of language in both written and spoken form (Sumarsono et al., 2017). The integration of authentic materials allows educators to develop assessments and activities that are aligned with real-world scenarios and challenges that students will face outside the classroom, reinforcing the practical application of their language skills and fostering a more comprehensive understanding of the target language.

Authentic materials are fundamentally linked to increased learner motivation and engagement, as they provide opportunities for students to connect their language learning to real-life contexts and experiences, thus making the learning process more relevant and meaningful (Ryandani et al., 2018). The use of authentic materials is recognized for its ability to make the learning experience more enjoyable and inspiring, which further motivates students to engage with language in an active and meaningful way (Baytar & Timucin, 2021). In addition, authentic materials serve to meet students' diverse linguistic needs by incorporating different forms of texts and topics that encourage a holistic approach to language learning, allowing for the simultaneous development of all four language skills in contexts that reflect students' life experiences.

The integration of authentic materials underscores the importance of aligning learning content and activities with students' background knowledge and language proficiency, ensuring that learning experiences are challenging and accessible, ultimately leading to improved language outcomes and a greater sense of learner autonomy. Moreover, the inclusion of such materials fosters an environment where students can express their thoughts and engage in meaningful discussions, further enhancing their communicative competence and encouraging collaborative learning experiences that are crucial in today's global communication landscape (Shuang, 2014).

Reasearch Ahmad & Millar (2020) shows that the role of authentic materials is crucial in curriculum development, with ongoing discussions on the need for authentic materials in the language classroom, especially as communicative language teaching approaches emphasize real-world applications and learner engagement. Research has shown that the integration of authentic materials not only enhances the relevance and applicability of language teaching, but also actively engages learners by providing them with opportunities to relate their language learning to their life experiences and cultural context, ultimately fostering deeper motivation and investment in the learning process.

Ahmad & Millar (2020) also mentions that the concept of authenticity in language teaching is multifaceted and complex, encompassing factors such as the text itself, the communicative situation, the participants involved, and the overall purpose of the interaction. In addition, empirical evidence Shuang (2014) revealed that when students are exposed to authentic texts that reflect their interests and cultural background, their motivation increases significantly, leading to improved language acquisition and communicative competence, ultimately confirming the importance of integrating such materials into the language curriculum.

This research offers new insights into how this approach not only improves students' motivation and engagement, but also their overall linguistic ability, providing a foundation for more effective curriculum development. Thus, this study aims to evaluate the impact of integrating authentic materials in language learning on learner engagement and the development of students' language skills.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study applied a quasi-experimental method to evaluate the impact of integrating authentic materials on students' language skill development. The research procedure involved measuring students' language skills before and after the intervention with authentic materials, which included speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Students from three classes with basic to intermediate English proficiency were randomly selected as the sample. Measurements were taken using baseline and endline tests, and the data were analyzed to determine changes in language skills. The research procedure was conducted as follows:

a. Sample Selection: 90 students from 3 classes with basic to intermediate English proficiency were randomly selected from a total population of 120 students.
b. Pre-Intervention Measurement: An initial test was conducted to measure students' language proficiency before the integration of authentic materials. The test covered speaking, listening, reading and writing skills.
c. Intervention: Authentic materials, such as news articles, recordings of original conversations, and narrative essays, were integrated into the curriculum over a 6-week period.
d. Post-Intervention Measurement: The same test was administered after the intervention period to measure changes in students' language skills.
e. Data Analysis: The data obtained from the pre- and post-intervention tests were analyzed to identify improvements in language skills. Results were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine the mean score and percentage improvement.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following table illustrates the distribution of students' initial English proficiency:

Table 1. Distribution of Students' Initial English Proficiency

Language Proficiency Category	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Elementary	30	33.3%
Intermediate	60	66.7%
Total	90	100%

Table 1 shows the distribution of students based on their English proficiency at the beginning of the study. Out of a total of 90 students, 30 students (33.3%) were in the basic English proficiency category, which included basic vocabulary comprehension, simple sentence structure, and limited speaking ability. Meanwhile, 60 students (66.7%) were in the intermediate English proficiency category, which includes a broader vocabulary understanding, reading and writing skills with more complex structures, and better speaking and listening skills. This distribution shows that the majority of students have more developed English language skills, i.e. intermediate, compared to basic skills.

Table 2. Average Score of Students' Language Ability Before and After Integrating Authentic Materials

Language Skills	Score Before (Average)	After Score (Average)	Percentage Increase
Speaking	66.5	82.3	23.8%
Listening	61.8	79.2	28.2%
Reading	68.4	85.1	24.4%
Writing	57.6	66.5	15.5%

The results of this study show a significant improvement in students' language skills after the integration of authentic materials into the curriculum. This improvement can be seen in various aspects of language skills, including speaking, writing, listening and reading. This is in line with the findings of (Sumarsono et al., 2017) , which emphasizes that the use of authentic materials not only increases student motivation, but also provides a real context for language learning. This relevant context helps students in understanding how language is used in real-life situations, which in turn improves their overall communication skills.

Authentic materials, such as news articles, recorded conversations and videos from everyday life, play a crucial role in language teaching as they provide a relevant and realistic context for students. The use of these materials allows students to see first-hand the application of language in real situations, which ultimately enhances their ability to use the language in a more natural and accurate way. In language teaching, authentic materials not only serve as a tool to introduce new vocabulary and sentence structures, but also help students understand cultural nuances, idiomatic expressions and language variations in different social contexts. This is in line with research showing that authentic materials provide content that is relevant and aligned with students' interests, thus increasing their motivation and engagement in language learning (Mamba, 2024; Mitrulescu & Negoescu, 2024). A study also found that students exposed to authentic materials reported higher levels of motivation, especially in translation tasks, as they found the content more relevant and stimulating (Oanh et al., 2024).

Ahmad & Millar (2020) emphasizes that the use of authentic materials in language learning has multiple benefits: firstly, authentic materials encourage students to develop their language skills through exposure to language used naturally in everyday communication; secondly, these materials increase students' motivation and engagement as they feel more connected to materials that are perceived as relevant and useful in their real lives. This motivation is important because motivated students tend to be more active in the learning process, participate more in class discussions, and do more independent practice outside of class, all of which contribute to the overall improvement of their language skills.

This research shows that the integration of authentic materials in language learning has a significant positive impact on students' language skills development, including speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. The use of authentic materials, which include relevant and contextualized content from real life, provides a richer and more meaningful learning experience. The 23.8% average improvement in speaking ability achieved by students reflects not only improvements in fluency and vocabulary, but also their ability to interact in more natural and relevant communication situations.

Authentic materials presented in realistic contexts provide opportunities for students to understand and use language as it should be in everyday life. This is in line with the findings Shuang (2014) which asserts that the use of authentic materials can enrich students' learning experience by presenting language in real communication contexts, thus improving their overall speaking ability. Shuang also emphasized the importance of authentic contexts in helping students develop better communication skills, especially in terms of using the right vocabulary and appropriate sentence structure. Similar results were also expressed by Treve (2023) in a comparative study that showed that students who used authentic materials outperformed those who used traditional textbooks. Teachers also noted that authentic resources not only improved grammar and vocabulary skills, but also increased cultural awareness, enriching students' learning experiences (Sayı, 2024).

Listening and reading skills in the context of using authentic materials showed that significant improvements in both skills not only supported the findings from previous research, but also confirmed the importance of authenticity in the language learning process. The average increase of 28.2% in listening skills shows that authentic materials are effective in developing students' listening comprehension. These materials offer opportunities for students to hear language in real situations, allowing them to recognize language variations, accents, intonations and speech rates that they would normally encounter in everyday communication. Sumarsono et al (2017) It is argued that through exposure to authentic materials, students are able to relate the language learned to more diverse social and situational contexts, which in turn strengthens their listening skills. This improvement is not just about word or phrase recognition, but also about understanding meaning in a broader context, which is crucial for fluent communication in a second language.

In addition, the 24.4% improvement in reading ability shows that students not only became more efficient in comprehending authentic texts but also more able to extract meaning from relevant and varied contexts. According to Ahmad & Millar (2020), Authentic materials provide a richer and more relevant reading context, which supports the development of students' reading skills. By reading texts that come from real situations and reflect authentic language use, students can develop better comprehension strategies, such as recognizing sentence patterns, connecting information, and inferring meaning from context. In addition, the diversity of authentic reading materials also allows students to develop critical skills in analyzing and interpreting texts, which is an important aspect of language literacy.

Thus, the improvement in listening and reading skills after the application of authentic materials not only supports the arguments from previous research, but also highlights the important role of authentic materials in enriching students' learning experiences and improving their language skills in a broader and more meaningful context.

The average increase of 15.5% in writing ability shows significant improvement, although this improvement is not as great as that seen in other language skills. One factor that could explain this result is the selection of authentic materials relevant to real writing contexts. Authentic materials, as stated by Shuang (2014), play an important role in language learning by providing a realistic context and supporting learners' deep

engagement in writing activities. Shuang emphasizes that the use of materials close to real life can motivate students to develop deeper writing skills, as they are better able to see the relevance and practical application of what they are writing.

However, despite the significant improvement, the lower percentage of improvement in writing skills compared to other skills may be due to the complex nature of the writing skill itself. Writing requires the integration of various aspects of language, including grammar, vocabulary, and the ability to organize and communicate ideas clearly. These factors make improvement in writing skills tend to be slower and take longer than in other more direct skills, such as listening or speaking.

Ultimately, these findings underscore the importance of integrating authentic materials in language teaching methodologies, as they not only promote higher student motivation and engagement, but also significantly contribute to the development of communicative competence, thus equipping students with the necessary skills to effectively navigate real-world language use. Authentic materials not only improve language skills but also increase student engagement and motivation, in accordance with theory and practice. The effective integration of authentic materials in language learning shows that this approach can bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world language use, facilitating deeper understanding and better communication skills.

4. CONCLUSION

This research shows that integrating authentic materials in English language learning has a positive impact on learners' engagement and the development of their language skills. The use of real-life relevant materials increases students' motivation and participation, and facilitates a deeper understanding of the language. The results showed significant improvements in students' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. The implication of the findings is that educators and educational institutions need to consider the use of authentic materials as an integral part of the language learning curriculum. By integrating materials that reflect real communication situations, students can better prepare themselves to face language challenges in daily life. It can also increase the effectiveness of language teaching and motivate students to learn more actively.

REFERENCES

Ahmad, H., & Millar, R. M. (2020). Review of text authenticity relationship with language learner motivation and communicative competence. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, *10*(5), 89–99.

Baytar, İ., & Timucin, M. (2021). Harnessing literature in EFL teaching: A case in point. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, *17*(S1), 327–345.

Erbaggio, P., Gopalakrishnan, S., Hobbs, S., & Liu, H. (2012). Enhancing student engagement through online authentic materials. *IALLT Journal of Language Learning Technologies*, *42*(2), 27–51.

Mamba, M. A. (2024). Authentic materials: fostering collaborative language learning. *European Journal of English Language Teaching*, *9*(2).

Mitrulescu, C. M., & Negoescu, A. G. (2024). The Role of Authentic Materials in EFL

Education: Maximizing Student Engagement and Language Acquisition. *International Conference Knowledge-Based Organization*, *30*(2), 1–6.

Oanh, T. K., VO, Van, M. T., & HUYNH. (2024). Exploring the Benefits of Authentic Materials in Enhancing Translation Students' Motivation. *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research*, *7*(7), 4938–4946.

Ryandani, V., Nurkamto, J., & Sarosa, T. (2018). The use of authentic materials on teaching reading and its effects on students' reading motivation. *English Education*, *6*(3), 263–269.

Sayı, B. (2024). English Language Teachers' Perspectives on the Integration of Authentic Materials in Reading Classes. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, *7*(6), 143–161.

Shuang, L. (2014). Authenticity in Language Teaching. *Applied Mechanics and Materials*, *543–547*, 4294–4297. https://doi.org/10.4028/www.scientific.net/AMM.543-547.4294

Sumarsono, D., Bagis, A. K., & Arrafii, M. A. (2017). Students' needs to develop English writing materials. *Lingua Cultura*, *11*(2), 67–71.

Treve, M. (2023). Examining The Impact Of Using Authentic Materials On Esl/Efl Learners. *International Journal of Empirical Research Methods*, *1*(1), 40–50.

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).