THE EFFECT OF USING AUTHENTIC MATERIALS TO ENHANCE STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION ACHIEVEMENT

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Abstract: This research explored the influence of utilizing authentic texts as reading materials on the reading performance of high school students and their perceptions of these materials. It addressed the gap in existing studies that predominantly relied on qualitative methods, which lacked quantitative data on the impact of authentic texts on students' reading achievement. The study employed a pre-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design, involving 21 second-year students from a senior high school in Situbondo, East Java, during the 2021/2022 academic period. The instruments used included pre-tests and post-tests to assess reading achievement and questionnaires to capture students' perceptions of the materials. The data were analyzed using a paired sample t-test to determine the significance of the changes in reading scores and descriptive analysis for the questionnaire results. The findings revealed a significant improvement in reading scores, with an average increase of 19.25 points, indicating the effectiveness of authentic texts in enhancing reading comprehension and vocabulary retention. The questionnaire results also showed that the majority of students found the materials engaging and beneficial for learning. This research underscored the importance of integrating real-life texts into the curriculum to bridge the gap between classroom learning and practical language use. The study provided quantitative evidence supporting the benefits of authentic materials in language education, suggesting that their use could significantly improve reading achievement and learner motivation. These insights could inform educators and curriculum developers in enhancing language instruction strategies.

Keywords: *authentic material, exposition text, reading comprehension, reading materials, student's perception*

INTRODUCTION

Reading proficiency is a fundamental skill for mastering any language, including English. High school students, however, frequently encounter difficulties with reading comprehension, largely due to limited background knowledge and vocabulary (Rizqon et al., 2021). This issue highlights the necessity for effective teaching materials that can provide meaningful and engaging learning experiences. Authentic materials, which are real-life resources created for native speakers in their

natural contexts, have been identified as a potential solution to this challenge (Namaziandost et al., 2021).

Authentic materials differ from traditional educational resources because they reflect actual language use and context, thus enhancing students' engagement and interaction during the learning process (Halim et al., 2018). Anam et al. (2019) emphasized that employing authentic materials in the classroom can significantly boost students' motivation and interest in learning English. With the advent of digital technology, accessing such materials has become more straightforward, allowing teachers to integrate them more easily into their curriculum. However, the successful implementation of these materials requires creativity and strategic planning on the part of the educators.

Despite the advantages, the literature revealed a significant gap in quantitative research measuring the direct impact of authentic materials on students' reading achievement scores. While studies like those by Handayani and Dewi (2022) and Eginanda et al. (2022) provided valuable insights into teacher perceptions and specific applications of authentic materials, they primarily relied on qualitative data and subjective evaluations. For instance, Handayani and Dewi (2022) found that teachers believed authentic materials helped students become more familiar with the topics, and Eginanda et al. (2022) demonstrated that authentic materials, such as Electronic Interactive Novels (EIN), improved narrative reading skills in tenth-grade students. However, these studies did not provide quantitative evidence on the effectiveness of authentic materials in improving reading achievement scores.

Furthermore, Putra et al. (2022) conducted a descriptive study on the implementation of authentic materials in senior high schools, highlighting their positive effect on students' reading motivation and achievement. Nevertheless, the lack of quantitative data measuring the direct impact on reading scores remained a critical gap. Addressing this gap was crucial for validating the effectiveness of authentic materials through empirical evidence.

Therefore, this study aimed to bridge this knowledge gap by adopting a quantitative approach to examine the direct impact of authentic materials on students' reading achievement scores. Additionally, the study investigated students' perceptions of these materials to provide a comprehensive understanding of their significance and effectiveness. By addressing these gaps, this research contributed to the field of language education by offering innovative insights into the quantifiable benefits of authentic materials, thus enhancing our understanding of their role in improving reading comprehension and motivation. By combining quantitative data with students' perceptions, this study provided a more holistic view of the advantages of authentic materials in language education, thereby informing educators and curriculum developers about effective strategies for enhancing reading proficiency among high school students.

METHODOLOGY

In order to examine the effectiveness of authentic text as reading material, this research used a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies. This approach allows for a more comprehensive analysis by integrating numerical data with descriptive insights. On the quantitative component, a One Group Pretest-Posttest design was employed, involving single class as participant that focused on students' reading achievement before and after the

treatment. The comparison of pre-test and post-test scores provides quantitative data on the effectiveness of the intervention. Although this design does not include a control group, it allows for an initial exploration of the potential benefits of using authentic materials in an EFL context.

This study also employs qualitative component to strengthen the result of the quantitative analysis. This descriptive study aims to provide insight into the students' perception toward the use of authentic test during learning process. The data were collected through a Likert scales questionnaire. It contains several questions to measure participants' opinion and attitudes using range of options.

The study began with the administration of a pretest to establish the students' initial reading scores. Further, the treatment was given utilizing authentic analytical exposition texts, chosen to show real-life language usage and to engage students in reading. The selected texts covered topics that were pertinent to the students' lives at that time, such as news related to the pandemic and sports. Following the treatment period, a post-test was carried out to assess the students' final reading scores.

The primary data, which consisted of the students' pretest and post-test reading scores, were then analysed using statistical methods to evaluate the impact of authentic texts on reading achievement. With this methodological approach, the study aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the influence of authentic materials on students' reading skills and to provide measurable evidence of their advantages in language education.

Subjects

This study was conducted at a Senior High School in Situbondo, East Java. The population of this research were second-year students in the academic year 2021/2022, consisting of three classes with a total of 63 students. Based on the teacher, several students had difficulties understanding texts due to a limited vocabulary, making it an appropriate setting for this study.

This approach was chosen to ensure that the sample included students who specifically faced challenges in reading comprehension, which aligns with the study's objectives. Interviews were conducted with the English teachers to identify the materials typically used in teaching reading and to understand the common problems encountered in the classroom. Through the result of the interview and observation, XI Science 2 was chosen as the participant. This classroom comprised 21 students which having difficulties in reading and never been exposed with authentic material.

Additionally, a questionnaire was distributed to the students to gather their perceptions about the use of authentic materials in teaching reading comprehension.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

There are two types of data which were related to the current research goals. The first was quantitative data in the form of reading achievement scores of the pre-test and the post test scores. Those data were analyzed and compared using SPSS 20 by implementing paired samples T-test.

Additionally, to investigate the students' perception regarding authentic material, a questionnaire was distributed for each participant. They were asked to fill the question based on their experiences with lessons involving authentic texts. The responses were counted and illustrated in charts, along with percentage breakdowns.

Following this, the results of the analysis were described in detail in the findings section.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Findings

Having gathered the required data, pre-test and post-test reading scores, paired sample t-test was run to investigate the difference of student's reading achievement before and after the treatment.

Table 1. Paired sample t-test result

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre_Test	59.52	21	10.357	2.260
	Post_Test	79.05	21	6.045	1.319

Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences

The p-value in Table 1 indicates whether there was a significant difference between the data. Conversely, the p-value in Table 1 was 0.000 which was lower than 0.05. It could be inferred that there was a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. Further, the mean pre-test score was 59.52, while the mean post-test score increased to 79.05. It indicated an average improvement of 19.25 points. Thus, confirming a significant improvement in reading achievement after using authentic materials.

To determine the effect size (d), Cohen's d formula for a paired-sample t-test was applied by dividing the mean difference and the standard deviation. According to Cohen (2013), a d value lower than 0.2 was considered a small effect, lower than 0.8 represented a medium effect and greater than 0.8 showed a large effect size. By using this formula, it can be found that the d value of this research is 2.6 which is larger than 0.8. Therefore, the implementation of authentic materials had a substantial positive impact on students' reading achievement.

Statement:
I like material from the book more than reading material from the real word.

■ Strongly Agree   ■ Agree   ■ Not Sure
■ Disagree   ■ Strongly Disagree

Figure 1. Students' opinion on the use of authentic material

Following the post-test, a questionnaire was administered to gather students' perception of the material. The questionnaire contained ten close-ended questions. Each question contains a statement, and the students need to express their perception toward the statement using Likert scale. The result of the questionnaire can be seen in Figure 1 above.

The first thing analysed was the students' opinion toward the use of authentic text. As shown in Figure 1, only 5% of students strongly agree with the statement. Conversely, 38% strongly disagreed and another 38% disagree that they like the book material more than authentic material. This suggests a generally positive reception of authentic materials among the students.

Table 2. Students' motivation in learning using authentic materials

Statements	Respond				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Authentic materials make learning more interesting	38%	43%	19%	0%	0%
Authentic materials make me sleepy during the lesson	0%	14%	19%	33%	33%
Authentic materials lose my interest to ask further question	5%	10%	19%	24%	43%

The second aspect focused on whether authentic materials motivate the students. According to table 2, majority of the students (38% strongly agreed and 43% agreed) were interested in learning using authentic materials. Meanwhile, only 19% of the students were unsure about the statement

Although plenty of students agreed that it was interesting, there were 14% students agreed that authentic material made them feel sleepy, whereas 33% strongly disagreed and 33% disagreed with this statement. Further, it showed that 5% of the students strongly agreed and 10% agreed that they lose willingness to ask a question related to the material when using authentic text. On the other hand, 24% strongly disagreed, and 43% disagreed with this statement, indicating that authentic materials generally did not decrease students' engagement.

Table 3. Students' opinion on how authentic materials affect the lesson

Statements	Respond				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Authentic materials make learning English easier	43%	33%	24%	0%	0%
Authentic materials improve my English better	43%	38%	19%	0%	0%
Authentic materials make remembering vocabularies easier	43%	38%	19%	0%	0%

The third analysis evaluated the students' opinion on how authentic materials impacted their learning. As shown in figure 3, 43% strongly agreed and 33% agreed

that the use of authentic material made learning English easier. While 24% of the students were not sure about this statement. Additionally, 81% of the students (strongly agree and agree) felt that using authentic material improve their English better. Furthermore, in the total of 81% of the students agreed that authentic material made remembering vocabularies easier.

As pointed in the analysis above, majority of the students had positive perception toward the implementation of authentic material. This finding is supported by the percentage of the questionnaire which shows that 76% of the students can be classified agreed that they like authentic text as the reading material. The students feel that authentic material help them in understanding English easier (76%), improving their English (81%) and remembering the vocabulary (81%). These findings indicate that authentic materials not only enhance reading achievement but also positively influence students' attitudes toward learning.

Discussion

This research aimed to investigate the effect of utilizing authentic text on high school students' reading achievement and their perception toward the materials. The findings confirms that authentic materials enhance reading motivation and comprehension among the students. The significant improvement in reading scores and positive student feedback highlights the importance of integrating real-life texts into language instruction, providing valuable insights into the pedagogical benefits of authentic materials.

The paired sample t-test result indicated an improvement in reading achievement with an average increase of 19.25 points from pre-test to post-test. This significant effect supports the notion that authentic materials positively impact reading achievement. These findings are in line with the previous research conducted by Namaziandost et al. (2021), who demonstrated that authentic material significantly improve reading comprehension and motivation among Iranian EFL learners. Anam et al. (2019) also emphasized the positive benefits of using authentic text, which improve students' motivation and engagement with the material.

Further corroboration comes from Fitria (2022), who highlighted those non-authentic materials, often disconnected from real-life contexts, are less effective in improving reading comprehension and motivation. Thus, this research reinforces the value of incorporating authentic materials into the language curriculum to foster better learning outcomes, validating the previous research and adding quantitative evidence to the discussion.

This research also found that authentic materials provide the learners new experience when exposed to the real-world language use, enhancing their understanding and retention of vocabulary and improving overall language proficiency. This study contributes to the body of literature supporting the use of authentic texts, as evidenced by Rama (2020), Sulaiman (2020), and Islam and Santoso (2018), who found that authentic materials significantly improved reading comprehension across different educational levels.

The positive perception of authentic materials among students, as indicated by the questionnaire results, underscores the importance of engaging students with relevant and meaningful content. Using real life text as reading material give opportunity to the students to learn something which are not provided within their textbook. It also increases students' interest and motivation, making learning more

enjoyable and effective. Boyacı and Güner (2018) observed similar outcomes, noting that students were more motivated and performed better when exposed to authentic, task-based materials compared to traditional textbooks.

Despite their advantages, the use of authentic materials in teaching comes with challenges. Zohoorian (2015) found that not all students may benefit equally from authentic materials, due to differences in learning styles, background knowledge, and personal interests. Rusmawaty et al. (2018) identified challenges for teachers, such as introducing new topics, addressing cultural differences, and the time-consuming process of finding and adapting authentic materials. Educators must be creative and adaptable to integrate these materials effectively into their lesson plans.

Andreani et al. (2021) highlighted that developing awareness of text genres and promoting good reading habits can significantly improve students' comprehension skills when using authentic materials. Teachers can help students navigate and understand diverse texts by focusing on genre-specific strategies and encouraging regular reading.

Additionally, pairing authentic materials with effective teaching strategies can enhance their impact. Septiyanto et al. (2023) found that using metacognitive reading strategies alongside authentic materials significantly improved students' reading comprehension. This suggests that while authentic materials are beneficial, their effectiveness is amplified when combined with strategies that promote active and reflective reading.

In conclusion, this study confirms that authentic materials have a significant positive impact on students' reading achievement and motivation. The findings fill a crucial gap in quantitative research on this topic, offering valuable insights into the effectiveness of authentic materials in language education. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on qualitative evaluations and teacher perceptions (Handayani & Dewi, 2022; Eginanda et al., 2022), this research employs a robust quantitative approach. By using a pre-experimental design with pre-test and post-test measures, this study provides empirical evidence of the effectiveness of authentic materials in enhancing reading achievement. By providing empirical evidence, this study supports the integration of authentic materials into language curricula, advocating for a more engaging and effective approach to language teaching. Future research should continue to explore innovative ways to implement authentic materials and address the associated challenges to maximize their benefits for students.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Authentic material is material that was taken or created contextually to be similar to real-life material. It exposes the student to real-life language use in the actual context. This research has several findings about the implementation of authentic material on senior high school students' reading achievement. The first finding of this research reflected the effect of utilizing authentic media on the reading process. From the data analysis result, it showed that there was a significant effect on the implementation of this media. The second finding of this research was about how the students perceive the authentic text as material to enhance their reading comprehension. Based on the questionnaire analysis, it was found that most students are interested in reading when authentic material is applied. Moreover, reading real-life text made them understand the context more easily. Some students agreed that implementing authentic material improves their reading by expanding their

vocabularies faster. Thus, it can be concluded that authentic material is suitable for the students since it could boost their motivation in reading. In most cases, students with high motivation in reading understand the material better and receive higher reading achievement test results than before.

The implementation of authentic materials has significantly increased students' motivation and reading achievement. In light of these findings, recommendations are provided for students, teachers, and future research. Students are advised to practice reading using real-world materials readily accessible through internet resources. Emphasizing topics relevant to their lives can enhance engagement. Integrating authentic materials into reading comprehension instruction is encouraged for teachers, as it fosters motivation and comprehension of real-life language usage. Despite potential challenges, teachers are urged to exhibit determination in material preparation and instructional decision-making, prioritizing authenticity oversimplification. Future research should continue to explore the various applications of authentic materials in different educational contexts. Investigating the long-term effects of using authentic texts on language proficiency and examining their impact on other language skills, such as writing and speaking, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of their benefits. Developing innovative strategies to overcome the challenges associated with authentic materials, such as cultural differences and the time required for material preparation, is also essential.

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