

AUTHENTIC MATERIALS IN EFL READING CLASSROOM: EFFECTS ON STUDENTS' COMPREHENSION AND MOTIVATION

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Received: 2026-04-23

Accepted: 2026-05-28

Published: 2026-06-15

Abstract

This study aimed to find out the effect of using authentic materials in learning English, especially for reading comprehension. Besides, the students' motivation in reading was also explored. This study employed a quantitative experimental design using a one-group pre-test/post-test approach. The population consisted of 11 first-grade classes at a senior high school in Langsa. One class of 25 students was selected through purposive sampling as the sample. A reading test in the form of multiple choices and a student response questionnaire were administered to collect the data. The results showed that there is a good improvement in students' reading comprehension. This finding is supported by the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. Students' average scores improved from 56.8 (pre-test) to 80.8 (post-test), surpassing the minimum competency standard. Students also reported increased interest, motivation, and vocabulary acquisition when using authentic materials. Findings suggest that authentic materials can enhance reading comprehension and student motivation. This study contributes to EFL pedagogy by demonstrating the effectiveness of authentic materials in improving reading comprehension and motivation. However, the study was limited to one class and may not generalize to broader populations.

Keywords: *authentic materials; reading comprehension; students' motivation; teaching reading*

1. Introduction

Reading is a fundamental skill in language teaching and learning. Reading is an important skill in EFL contexts for acquiring new vocabulary. The large amount of new vocabulary acquired makes it easier for students to understand the text quickly. Apart from that, reading is also one of the ways to create students critical thinking. Students can grow their critical thinking through different reading process (Arifin, 2020), materials (Himawan, Suyata, & Kusmiatun, 2024), strategies (Yulian, 2021). Through reading process, the students could raise questions related to information from the text and look for solutions to questions that cross their mind.

Students in learning English are targeted to be able to understand the meaning and implied messages of the text through reading. It is in line with English learning target in high school level, particularly in phase E, mentioned that students are expected to be able to

understand and infer information implied from reading written texts (Hermawan, Haryati & Suryaningsih, 2022). Therefore, it is important for students to master reading skill to make it easier to achieve learning goals and build critical thinking for students.

However, recently learning reading has been considered ineffective and difficult to master due to several factors. Observations through informal interviews that the author has conducted with one of the English teachers at some senior high schools in Langsa revealed that most students have difficulty understanding the content of texts. As a result, students struggle with reading comprehension due to limited vocabulary, overreliance on dictionaries, and low motivation, resulting in average scores of 76–78. Some previous studies also indicated the same problems, such as students cannot understand the meaning of the text well as a whole for long paragraphs (Fitriana, 2018), students still lack of vocabulary and background knowledge (Asra, Rahmiati, Fadlia, & Mawaddah, 2026; Wijayanti, 2020), and students use ineffective reading strategies (Yulian, 2021).

To overcome difficulties in understanding reading, one idea is to integrate the authentic materials into collaborative learning process. Even though debates are still raging on why it should or should not be included in learning, it is clear that those authors who support the use of authentic material have a common understanding that the authentic materials exposed students to the language in authentic setting. As Wong, Kwok, and Choi (1995, p. 318) stated that through the use of authentic materials, students can achieve an understanding of how language is used properly in real life. Therefore, the teachers need to consider using it during teaching English, especially for reading skill.

Other recent studies also found the benefit of authentic materials, for instance the use of authentic materials was effective in training students reading comprehensions skills (Jihad, Nasriandi, & Jusriati, 2023), the authentic materials can increase students' reading ability and achieve curriculum learning targets (Sukmawati, 2020), and students' interest in reading increases after implementing learning with authentic (Rama, 2020). Therefore, authentic materials are recommended to be applied in English learning to help students understand reading texts and increase students' interest in reading. The previous studies show authentic materials improve motivation and comprehension, but few have examined their integration with collaborative learning in senior high school contexts.

This study used the collaborative learning method to achieve joint learning goals by carrying out the learning in groups. The use of collaborative learning in reading using authentic materials can encourage social interaction and improve communication and critical thinking skills. Collaboration in learning allows students to discuss and understand text better, as well as motivate students due to the use of authentic material. Thus, this study aims to investigate the effect of authentic materials, integrated with collaborative learning, on students' reading comprehension and motivation. This study contributes to EFL pedagogy by demonstrating how authentic materials, combined with collaborative learning, can enhance reading comprehension and motivation among high school students in Aceh.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Authentic Teaching Material

Authentic materials are texts created for real-life communication, not specifically for pedagogy (Berardo, 2006, p. 60). It means that a text can be said to be authentic if the material is created with a real communicative purpose where the author has a special message to convey to the reader using the original source language and is not intended for

teaching. In connection with this explanation, Adam (1995) stated that in proving that a material is original, it can be proven by looking at who created it and to whom it was distributed. It can be said to be original if it was created by a native speaker with the target being the native speaker himself.

Authentic material is the right thing for students to use to improve language skills because it presents material that leads to the real world in a certain context. Peacock (1997, p. 144) stated that authentic material is material that is created and has been distributed to achieve several social goals in a language community. It shows authentic material that was originally intended for real communicative purposes, such as newspapers, advertisements, news reports, songs and others. Although authentic material is not designed for pedagogical purposes, the use of authentic materials is recommended for pedagogical use, one of which is teaching a language.

The use authentic materials in language teaching can increase students learning motivation by presenting various types of authentic context. Authentic materials present interesting material and gives students the opportunity to obtain real information and find out more about what is happening in the world around them. Guariento and Morely (2001: 347) stated that students generate a sense of accomplishment in gathering important information from real texts in a new or different language and can be very motivating. Besides, the authentic texts also bring students closer to the target culture, making the learning process more enjoyable and motivating (Peacock, 1997, p. 144). Therefore, authentic material has an effect on increasing students' learning motivation by exposing students to "real" language.

In applying authentic materials, teachers need to pay attention to various aspects in order to make the materials used are in accordance with students' needs and provide results in accordance with learning outcomes. Berardo (2006, p. 60) stated that there are three main aspects in choosing authentic materials used in the classroom, including: (a) suitability of content: in this case teachers need to pay attention to the suitability of the content that will be used in class, such as choosing texts with themes that are interesting, motivate students and suit students' needs; (b) exploitation: in terms of exploitation, refers to how a material can be applied and utilized to improve students' abilities in the learning process; and (c) readability: readability refers to the level of difficulty of a text. Likewise, the number of new vocabulary and new structures contained in the text.

2.2 Reading Comprehension

Reading is the process to understand the meaning in the text. According to Patterson (2016), reading is a meaning-making process. Creating meaning in reading will link information and knowledge that is already known, then it can predict what will happen and synchronize it with new information. Therefore, reading is a process of constructing meaning through dynamic interactions that occur between the background knowledge of the reader, the message suggested by written language, and the context of the situation in reading. This shows that reading activities are related to the formation of meaning.

Furthermore, Berardo (2006, p. 60) stated that in reading there is a process where the reader constructs a meaning by reading each word, letter by letter, then examining the vocabulary and syntax in detail. It shows how someone can understand and interpret the

meaning of a written text in obtaining information. This activity is called comprehension of reading or reading comprehension.

Boarman, Klingner, and Vaughn (2007) stated that reading comprehension is a process of interaction between readers and the background they bring to a text, such as knowledge and application of strategies. It shows that the process of reading comprehension is related to the background knowledge that the reader has and relates it to new texts by applying the strategies they have to achieve a faster and more precise understanding of the meaning.

Reading comprehension means understanding the meaning, assessing, and utilizing information messages and ideas obtained through dialogue between the writer and the reader (Ardiana, 2015, p. 140). It shows that in reading comprehension there is an interaction process between two people, namely the reader and the writer through the medium of written text. Reading comprehension is also interpreted as a complex process where readers use their intellectual abilities to understand the meaning of a text. It shows the importance of the quality of a text as a determinant of reading comprehension.

For students, reading is an inevitable activity in learning. They need to master reading skill since reading ability is one way for someone to get various kinds of information and knowledge (Fitriana, 2018, p. 43). To measure students reading comprehension, some indicators have been proposed. King and Stanley (1989) stated that there are several indicators in reading comprehension, especially in descriptive texts for students, including main idea: students can get the main idea or ideas from a text; finding factual: students can obtain the general structure and detailed messages from a text; references: students can understand references from a text; conclusion: students are able to create a summary of a text; and vocabulary: students can understand the meaning of the vocabulary found in the text.

3. Research Method

The method used in this study was quantitative experimental research with a one group pre-test post-test design. This design allowed the study to measure the effect of authentic materials on students' reading comprehension and motivation. Experimental research tests cause-and-effect relationships between variables (Creswell, 2012), while a one group pre-test post-test design is used to measure the actions of a group before and after implementing an experiment (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2010). Thus, this study employed a one-group pre-test/post-test design, measuring students' reading comprehension before and after treatment.

The population consisted of 11 first-grade classes at a senior high school in Langsa. One class (X-10) with 25 students was selected purposively, based on high motivation and lack of prior exposure to authentic materials. The purposive sampling is a technique for selecting samples based on the researcher's special considerations (Creswell, 2012). The participation was voluntary, and students' identities were anonymized. The study was conducted with school approval.

In collecting the data, this study used test as instruments in the form of pretest and posttest. The pre-test and post-test are presented in multiple choice form with 10 questions with choices (A, B, C, D and E). The questions related to the type of text and are focused on understanding related to the content of the text. The pre-test and post-test consisted of 10

multiple-choice items assessing comprehension of descriptive texts. Items were validated by expert review.

The pre-test given in the first meeting. After that, the treatment involved three sessions using authentic texts (reviews and reports) from Calameo Magazine and The New York Times, selected based on student interest in football and film. The selected reading materials were based on an initial study in which students chose the top two topics, namely football and film. The treatments used authentic reading materials was carried out in 3 meetings. After provided treatment using authentic material, in the last meeting students did a final test (post-test). The final procedure, students were asked to fill out a questionnaire regarding their responses to the use of authentic material in learning reading. The questionnaire assessed students' perceptions of interest, motivation, and vocabulary development when using authentic materials.

The data obtained was administered in the form of a frequency table or score distribution. The categories are adopted from Sugiyono (2008, p. 182) as follows: *very high* (85-100), *high* (69-84), *moderate* (53-68), *low* (37-52), and *very low* (20-36). For the first step, the data were compared to the KKM (*kriteria ketuntasan minimum* [minimum criteria of mastery learning]) score of 75. Then, the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) and paired-sample t-tests in SPSS v.30 to determine significant differences between pre-test and post-test scores. The result of t-test was the final indicator to measure the significant differences between pre-test and post-test by comparing both scores to know the effect of using authentic materials on students reading comprehension achievement.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Students Reading Comprehension Achievement

The results showed the positive effect of using authentic material in teaching reading skill. Based on the data analysis, the highest score obtained in the pre-test was 70 and the highest score in post-test is 100. It is also in line with the average scores of post-test (80.8) that is higher than pre-test (56.8) with the difference of 24 points (see Table 3). In the pre-test, the frequency of reading comprehension scores on the pre-test is low and has not yet reached the KKM score. The distribution of pre-test score can be seen in the following table.

Table 1.

Distribution Frequency of Students' Pre-Test

Class Interval	Score	Category	Frequency	Percentage
69-84	70	High	6	24
53-68	60	Moderate	9	36
37-52	50	Low	6	24
	40		4	16
Σ			25	100

The data in Table 1 above showed that the highest score was 70 within *high* category obtained as many as 6 students. Then the lowest score obtained on the pre-test was 40

within *low* category as many as 4 students (16%). Yet, there were also 6 students (24%) who got score of 50 and it was still in *low* category. Thus, there were 10 students (40%) in total who got low score. Besides, there were 9 students (36%) with *moderate* category. It means that even though there were 6 students that got good score of 70 in the higher category. Yet, they also could not pass the KKM score of 75. In other words, there is none of students that achieved KKM score.

To solve this, the authentic material was applied in their reading comprehension activity. One researcher acted as teacher taught English subject for the students using authentic text as a material for reading activities. After five treatments using authentic text, in the last meeting the teacher conducted again the test as the post-activity. The results of post-test score can be seen in the Table 2 below.

Table 2.

Distribution Frequency of Students' Post-Test

Class Interval	Score	Category	Frequency	Percentage
85-100	100	Very High	4	16
69-84	80	High	16	64
	70		4	16
53-68	60	Moderate	1	4
Σ			25	100

Based on the Table 2 above, the highest score obtained in the post-test was 100 with category *very high* category of 4 students (16%), while the lowest score obtained was 60 within *moderate* category with only one student (4%). Then, there were 16 students (64%) got score of 80 and 4 students (16%) with score of 70 within *high* category. Only one student (4%) was still in *moderate* category. Even though there were 5 students did not pass the KKM score, four of them are within *high* category. In contrast, there were 20 students (80%) passed the KKM score in post-test. The results indicate a significant improvement in reading comprehension following the use of authentic materials. In other words, this data showed that there is a good influence of using authentic material on students' reading comprehension achievement. To know whether the improvement significant or not, the data of pre-test and post-test are administrated into the following table.

Table 3.

Analysis of Pre-Test and Post Test Scores

Score	N	Σ	M
Pre-Test	25	1420	56.8
Post-Test	25	2020	80.8
Gain		600	24

Based on the Table 3 above, it showed that the average student score on the pre-test is 56.8, while the average score on the post-test is 80.8. It can be concluded that there is a high increase in the average score on the students' pre-test and post-test. In other words, students' reading comprehension achievement scores increased before and after using authentic material.

To test the hypothesis, this study used t-test formula to determine the significance of the difference between pre-test and post-test results. For significance, this study used significance values of 5% ($\alpha=0.05$) and 1% ($\alpha=0.01$). As a result, based on the statistical analysis of the t-test, it showed that the t-observation value is 19.165 and the degree of freedom (*df*) is 24. The results of the t-test values are then consulted in the t-table both at the 5% level with a significant level (2.064) and at significant level 1% (2.797). It showed the results either at the 5% or 1% significance level with the t-observed value is higher than the t-table. It means that there is a significant difference between two scores. The calculation results are presented in Table 4 as follows.

Table 4.
t-Score Results

t-test	t-table	
19.165	5%	1%
	2.064	2.797

Based on the data in the Table 4 above, it can be seen that the t-test value is higher than the table-test value. In this regard, it showed that there is a significant difference between the results of students' pre-test and post-test scores in reading comprehension after using authentic material. It means that the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted and the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. Therefore, it can be said that the use of authentic materials in learning English can improve students' reading comprehension achievements.

4.1.2 Students Responses of Using Authentic Materials

The questionnaire contains student responses to learning English using authentic material. Students filled out the questionnaire at the final meeting after taking the posttest. The following table showed the results of the student questionnaire responses to the use of authentic materials in learning English in class X-10.

Table 5.
Students Responses of Using Authentic Materials

No.	Statements/ Questions	SD	D	N	A	SA
1.	I am interested in learning using Authentic Materials	0	0	7	18	0
2.	Authentic Materials made easier to learning reading	0	0	2	12	11
3.	Authentic Materials made feel more motivated to read	0	0	3	14	8
4.	Authentic Materials expands knowledge of new vocabulary	0	0	2	23	0
5.	Learning using Authentic Materials is fun	0	0	4	9	12
6.	The Vocabulary in Authentic Materials is easy to remember	0	0	6	11	8
7.	I enjoy learning using Authentic Materials	0	0	7	18	0
8.	I am not interested learning using Authentic Materials	5	16	4	0	0
9.	Authentic Materials helps me more confident in English	0	0	5	14	6
10.	Authentic materials expand my knowledge in understanding any situation	0	0	6	14	5

Note: SD=strongly disagree; D=disagree; N=neutral; A=agree; SA=strongly agree

Table 5 above showed that students feel interested in learning using authentic materials, as evidenced by student responses to statements 1 and 8. From statement 1, it showed that 72% (18) of students agree and 28% (7) of them are neutral. Furthermore, in statement 8 student responses showed that 20% (5) of them is strongly disagree, 64% (16) of them is disagree and 16% (4) of them is neutral. Then, the student's response in statement 2 showed that 44% (11) of them is strongly agree, 48% (12) of them is agree and 8% (2) of them is neutral. Next, student responses to statement 3 showed that 32% (8) of them is strongly agree, 56% (14) of them is agree and 12% (3) of them is neutral regarding the use of authentic materials.

The notion that the students got motivated in learning using authentic material is also supported by students' responses in statement 5 which showed 48% (12) of students is strongly agree, 36% (9) of them is agree and 16% (4) of them is neutral. It also indicated that the students also had fun during learning using authentic materials. Apart from being fun, learning using authentic materials were also comfortable and helped students become more confident in speaking English. This is shown in statements 7 and 9. In statement 7, student responses showed that 72% (18) of students is agree and 28% (7) of them is neutral. Then, statement 9 showed that 24% (6) of them is strongly agree, 56% (14) of them is agree and 20% (5) of them is neutral.

Furthermore, students' positive responses were seen regarding the use of authentic materials for improving new vocabulary. They said that it was easy to remember the vocabulary. As a result, it could increase students' knowledge and understanding. This is proven by student responses to statements 4, 6 and 10. In statement 4, student responses showed that 92% (23) of them is agree and only 8% (2) of them is neutral. Then in statement 6, student responses showed that 32% (8) of them is strongly agree, 44% (11) of them is agree and only 24% (6) of them is neutral. Finally, on statement 10 the remaining responses showed that 20% (5) of them is strongly agree, 56% (14) of them is agree and 24% (6) of them is neutral.

The data above showed that most students reported increased interest, motivation, confidence, and vocabulary acquisition when using authentic materials. It increased their interest in reading, improved their motivation to learn, increased self-confidence, made their learning easier, and expanded their vocabulary knowledge which can help students understand text reading more easily. In other words, the authentic materials have a good influence on improving students' reading comprehension.

4.2 Discussion

The results show that many students are very interested and enthusiastic in the learning process when using authentic materials. During the learning activity, the students involved actively by asking many questions related to the reading theme. In this research, researchers used collaborative methods. This also increases the act of student in working together. Many students stated they prefer learning in groups because they can work together to exchange ideas in discussing a topic. Students' enthusiasm was seen when researchers distributed authentic texts and introduced authentic materials to students. This is done by adjusting the sustainability, exploitability and presentation factors of the

application of authentic materials in learning. As a result, most students enthusiastically mentioned examples of authentic materials.

Students also actively expressed their knowledge regarding the material to be discussed, because some students are interested and know the background of the topic to be studied. This raises students' curiosity about the authentic text provided. Therefore, the students are enthusiastic in completing assignments directed by researchers by understanding the reading text. Students reported positive engagement and enjoyment during the learning process. Students actively work together with each other to understand the reading text.

The application of authentic material helps students understand the text. The authentic texts bring students closer to the target culture, making the learning process more enjoyable and motivating (Peacock, 1997) and through the use of authentic materials students can achieve an understanding of how language is used properly in real life (Wong, Kwok, & Choi, 1995). It means that authentic material presents real language learning with real goals. Apart from that, students can easily understand the text when they are used to getting new vocabulary in each lesson. Students also acknowledged their knowledge of the text topic being studied. This helped students understand the text because they already have a picture that they know beforehand. This study contributes by integrating authentic materials with collaborative learning, demonstrating their combined effect on comprehension and motivation.

5. Conclusion

The use of authentic materials in English learning has an influence on increasing students' reading comprehension. This was obtained based on the pre-test and post-test results, which showed that authentic material had an influence on students' reading comprehension scores. An increase in student test scores was observed after learning with authentic materials. Scores improved significantly, confirming the effectiveness of authentic materials.

Furthermore, the use of authentic material increased students' reading motivation and expanded students' English vocabulary, making it easier for students to understand the content of the text. The results of the questionnaire also showed students' positive responses to the use of authentic materials. Students revealed that the use of authentic material increased their motivation to read, made it easier to learn English, expanded vocabulary, and helped increase their confidence in using English. Students also reported positive engagement and enjoyment during the learning process. These findings align with prior studies (Peacock, 1997; Wong, Kwok & Choi, 1995) and extend them by demonstrating effectiveness in the Aceh senior high school context.

This study contributes by integrating authentic materials with collaborative learning, demonstrating their combined effect on comprehension and motivation in senior high school contexts. Overall, authentic materials significantly improved reading comprehension and motivation, supporting their use in EFL pedagogy. However, the findings are limited by the small sample size and short intervention period, which may affect generalizability. So, future studies should examine long-term effects of authentic materials across diverse schools and explore their integration with digital platforms.

Acknowledgements

This research was partially supported by the English Language Education Study Program, Universitas Samudra, Langsa. The authors sincerely thank all individuals and institutions whose support, guidance, and valuable contributions facilitated the successful completion of this study. Their insights and expertise greatly enriched the quality of this research.

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