THE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS AUTHENTIC MATERIALS FOR READING AND LISTENING ACTIVITIES

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Abstract

This paper was aimed at investigating the students' perceptions towards authentic materials in reading and listening activities. In addition, this study also surveyed the students' preferred materials for both listening and reading activities for future classes. The learning of English has been evolving from using traditional media to more advanced and technology-friendly media. One of the media that is very accessible with the support of wide internet access nowadays is online authentic materials. With all the benefits of authentic materials and the use of technology in classroom activities, an English teacher at SMAN 10 Samarinda had been utilizing authentic materials for the past semester. A case study design was employed. The case was considered unique that the school is eminence with good student intake and the quality of student outcomes in academic achievement. Based on a pilot study, there was a need of supplementing the materials with authentic texts. It was for three reasons; first, there was tendency from the students to underestimate the lesson because the lesson, for them, was easy. Second, the book was not enough to prepare them for the national exam (UN) and real communication. Third, they often ran out of materials when they only used the students' book. The data was collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interview. The questionnaires were spread to 50 high school students from 2 accessible classes at the institution. After that, the data was analyzed. First findings from the questionnaire became the base for developing interview sessions with the students to get in-depth perspective of certain answers from them. The findings of how the students perceive the use of authentic materials were discussed. Finally, some suggestions to related significance were also proposed.

Keywords: *Authentic Materials, Listening, Reading*

INTRODUCTION

Authentic material has been an issue since the need of teaching applicable English has been emerging. This is because the society does not only see the role of English as part of the lessons they need to pass on the exam (instrumental) but also the presence of international society in the domestic education, work places, and tourism which raise the awareness of learning English language in real use (intrinsic). Learning a language cannot depend heavily on teaching the structure of the language and meaningless drilling practice. If the learning activity always uses graded/pedagogic materials, which are suited to the learning objectives and the structure of the language, students might not see how the language is used in real world.

The activity of learning a language, in this case learning English, should have balanced focus between form focus and meaning focus. As stated by Lightbown and Spada (2013:197), "Many teachers still work in environments where there is an emphasis on accuracy that excludes spontaneous language in classroom."

Therefore, the use of authentic material in EFL classes may be a great help to avoid the stiffness in language learning and to see how the language is actually used in real situations.

Not only will it help the learners to realize and capture how the language is expressed in real use, the use of authentic material will also expose the learner to more comprehensive exposure of the language which means that the students will be able to see how to suit the language functions and expressions more appropriately based on the situations. As stated before, the focus on form – non meaningful – learning was stills a strong influence to many teachers. This may lead the learners to insufficient exposure of real language use. Although there was an argumentation that a language set for the students on a textbook was design to help the students understand the target language better, yet there's still a chance that the students missed a culturally loaded language when the language was set out of its original context (Gilmore, 2007). Furthermore, when the content of the language is the focus of the speaker, natural language environment is exposed. Teachers, therefore, must simulate real use of the language in real situation in the classroom activities.

Despite all benefits that the authentic materials offer, there are numbers of challenges that the teachers might face in employing them in the classroom; first, it is time consuming to prepare the tasks so that the authentic texts, either in the forms of written or recorded, are ready for classroom use. This is because the authentic texts are not intentionally made for classroom purposes but for native speakers' consumption. Second, as they are not intended for students, some authentic texts sometimes do not fit the students' ability to comprehend. This will demand the teacher to select the materials carefully, at least in a comprehensible input range. Third, the authentic texts sometimes break the rules taught by the teacher in the classroom. Haines (1997) gave one example for this case that the language in advertisement is often notorious e.g. *'Discover why Pearl drops is whiter than white'*. When the students are not ready, this can be confusing and demotivating.

However, more advantages could be gained by utilizing authentic materials in the class (Haines, 1997; Berardo, 2006; Benavalent et.al., 2011; Al-Azri et.al., 2014): (1) Authentic materials are written or spoken in real English. This means that they are structurally and lexically varied. They also avoid repetition which characterized the graded materials. Furthermore, they have communicative purposes rather than the language focused purposes. (2) Authentic materials do not patronize foreign language learners. The non-graded materials are not for language learners. They are simply the examples of language in use. (3) Authenticity itself is attractive to learners.

Learners enjoy reading magazines, novels, and enjoy listening to latest popular English songs. (4) These materials can improve students' motivation and maintain their interests to the target language. (5) Authentic texts help students develop useful listening and reading strategies. Being exposed with the authentic texts in their tasks, students will be more ready with strategies to cope with various texts they find in the daily life. (6) Authentic texts can be exploited at different levels. It is possible to utilize the authentic materials for any levels ranging from elementary for reading for gist skill and scanning skills to

advanced level for in-depth understanding for the register and style of the author or the speaker. (6) It can be obtained from many different sources such as the internet, television commercials, newspaper, magazines, short stories, office documents, songs, books, etc. This can be options for the teacher to use wide variety of materials models.

In Indonesian context, specifically at SMAN 10 Samarinda a typical case about using authentic materials was identified. The school was considered as one of excellent schools at the province. Fully funded by the province government, this school became one of the best schools with above average student outcomes and achievements. Based on the results of initial interview with the XII-grade teacher, authentic materials were used as supplementary materials for the students. The need of supplementing the student's book with these materials emerged because the lessons from the students' book (*Buku Bahasa Inggris XII,* Curriculum 2013) was considered easy by the students and the teacher often ran out of materials when he rely on material from the book solely.

This is due to the students' level of proficiency that was quite high. Besides, at the school internet connection is very accessible. The connection supports the both students and teachers to access the heavy-load materials such as audio and video contents. In addition, from the teacher's perspective, when he used authentic texts, it was quite effective to engage the students in the learning process since there was tendency to underestimate the lesson from single use of student's book. This is considered as the uniqueness of the case that might not be found in most average schools.

Furthermore, in Indonesia there is the national exam (UN) that is administered by all the education level ranging from elementary school to senior high school (*BNSP, UU No. 20 Tahun 2003*). The exam is conducted as one of the components to evaluate the students' understanding and performance during their study. This exam consists of listening section and reading section with multiple-choice options. This is against the fact that the textbooks are rarely devised with the audio files for listening practices.

Some other interview results were related to using authentic materials for classroom purposes. First, the teacher thinks that it is important to find supplementary materials to support the student's textbook, as he cannot rely heavily on the textbooks for preparing the students ready for the exam. Second, the teacher finds authentic materials are now more accessible with the Internet so that he can get either the printed media or digital contents such as English songs, videos, etc more easily. Third, the students need more enrichment materials as a means to help them improve to face the national exam (UN) especially in listening and reading as these two skills are the core aspects to be tested in the exam.

These points have made the teacher decide to use the authentic materials for classroom purposes. Interestingly, he has been using the authentic materials such as newspaper, novels, short stories for reading activities and songs, films, and short videos for listening activities since August 2015. This means that the students have been exposed with some forms of authentic materials for more than one semester. Therefore, this study emerges to be conducted to investigate how the students perceive the current student's book and the

use authentic materials for listening and reading activities at SMAN 10 Samarinda so that the teacher could adjust future classes based on the results of the study.

METHOD

In order to probe the aims of the study, case study design was employed. It was considered because of the characteristics of the case at the school as mentioned in the background and the phenomenon that not many teachers in Indonesia used authentic materials for classroom purposes. So, to study the groups of the XII-grade students, case study was used to get further explanation about how the students at the school whose level of proficiency was good, perceive the current student's book and the use of authentic materials in the classroom (Latief; 2012).

This study was conducted with its nationally administered by the government. The stages of data collection are described as the following. focus to explore and to describe the students' perception on authentic materials so that it could answer the research problems (Creswell; 2007: 79). Bassey (1999:20) stated a criterion of case study is if it is an empirical inquiry conducted within localized boundary of space and time. The present study was conducted within groups of classes from the twelfth grade at SMAN 10 Samarinda and the students had experienced learning with various types of authentic texts for the past semester in 2015/2016.

Participants

This study was conducted at SMAN 10 Samarinda, East Kalimantan. The selection of the school was on the basis of accessibility, availability, and suitability reasons. Furthermore, total population in the twelve grade is 125 students from 5 classes which were administered by the school consisting of 4 science program classes and one social program class. All of the students were typical that they have experienced learning with authentic materials. Random sampling technique was done in selecting the groups of subjects involved from the whole population in the current study. Two of five classes were chosen. This means there were two classes with 50 students involved. The chosen classes were XII IPA 2 and XII IPA 3.

Instrument

In this study the researcher utilized two main instruments for data collection. The first instrument was interview and the second instrument was questionnaire. The interview consisted of two sets of questions; one set was for pilot study and another set for following up the results of the data collected from the second instrument, which was questionnaire. The questionnaire was adapted from the questionnaires designed by Al-Mussallam (2009: 128-131) to collect the data about the students' demographic data, the current classes with the textbooks, the use of authentic materials, and kinds of prefered authentic materials. However, some items are deleted because they are unrelated to the present study and some others are added to suit the need of the data in this study. Furthermore, a semi-structured interview was conducted with ten participants in order to get insights towards the results from the questionnaire which was previously distributed to the students.

Procedure

The data collection was conducted at the beginning of year 2016. This was the end of the semester for the students as they were about to be facing the national exam.

First, a pilot study with the teacher was conducted. From the result, it indicated that the teacher usually used various forms of authentic materials for the classroom activities in support of the use of the student's book. The teacher stated that he used authentic materials such as newspaper articles, magazine articles, songs, videos, internet materials to add more variations of activities so that he would not run out the materials from the book and the students were avoided from the boredom because the lesson from the book was sometimes considered easy by the students. Besides, he needed to add activities with authentic listening materials was well because the student's textbooks were rarely devised with audio files.

Second, as previously described, the questionnaires were distributed to all subjects. To ensure the effective implementation, the questionnaires were distributed in person by the researcher. The collection of the data was administered in turn in each class. There was introduction session between the researcher and the students which then was followed by an explanation about the topic and the purpose of the research. The students was informed that the questionnaires were as a means of data collection for masters' degree thesis. Next, the students were given 20 minutes to fill in the questionnaire and none of them were allowed to leave the class before the time. This is to avoid the students from trying to rush in filling out the questionnaire.

Third, the data from the questionnaire were analyzed. After getting the results from the questionnaire, interview sessions with ten students were conducted. These sessions were to confirm the findings from the questionnaire results. Each session with one student lasted for about 15 minutes so the time spent for interview sessions with the students was 150 minutes.

Fourth, interview session with the teacher was conducted to collect the data to answer the fifth research problem. The interview lasted for 60 minutes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the study about the students' perceptions towards authentic texts for listening and reading activities. The data were collected through questionnaire and interview. The scale index in the following tables was statistically calculated from the questionnaire and it represented the degree of students agreement to the questions in the questionnaire items.

Table 1. Students' Perceptions towards Authentic Materials for Reading

Item	SA		A		N		D		SD		SD	Score	Scale Index
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%			
1. improve my knowledge on vocabulary items used for daily communication through authentic texts	15	30	27	54	8	16	0	0	0	0	0,23	207	83%
2. help me to get used to reading authentic	9	18	29	58	11	22	1	2	0	0	0,23	196	78%

Item	SA		A		N		D		SD		SD	Score	Scale Index
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%			
materials													
3. improve my understanding in reading texts in daily communication contexts.	9	18	30	60	11	22	0	0	0	0	0,25	198	79%
4. help me practice my reading skills such as scanning and skimming.	12	24	27	54	7	14	2	4	2	4	0,21	195	78%
5. help me practice to understand the explicit and implicit information.	8	16	22	44	19	38	1	2	0	0	0,20	187	75%

Table 1 above shows how the students perceived their attitude towards the authentic materials in reading. The students strongly agreed with scale index 83%, the higher is the percentage, statistically the more the participant agreed to the statements, in this case that authentic text can help them improve their knowledge on vocabulary items used for daily communication. The next three items are almost alike in the scale index (78%, 79%, 78%) indicating that the students agreed that these materials could help them get used to reading English authentic texts which have various difficulties and various dictions. Besides, it could improve their ability in understanding the texts in daily contexts that might have differences with the pedagogic materials. Furthermore, they agreed that it could help them practice their skills in reading such as scanning and skimming. Similarly, using these materials also helped students practice deeper skills of reading like understanding explicit and implicit information as shown in Item 5.

Table 2. Students' Perceptions towards Listening Authentic Materials

Item	SA		A		N		D		SD		SD	Score	Scale Index
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%			
6. improve my skills in comprehending oral instruction in English.	11	22	32	64	4	8	2	4	1	2	0,26	200	80%
7. help me practice to comprehend oral texts from listening materials such as radio, video, songs, podcast, commercial, etc.	17	34	25	50	6	12	1	2	1	2	0,21	206	82%
8. improve my understanding of the articulation and pronunciation through listening audio in English.	15	30	20	40	14	28	0	0	1	2	0,18	198	79%

9. improve my understanding of how to respond various conversations through listening the examples of conversation. e.g., "How are you doing today?" "I am doing good."	13	26	27	54	9	18	0	0	1	2	0,22	201	80%
10. help me practice to listen to more complex conversation like in drama, film, or discussions either from *radio podcast* or *videos* from *YouTube*.	18	36	26	52	5	10	0	0	1	2	0,23	210	84%

Table 2 above shows the description of the students' perceptions towards listening authentic materials. Unlike their opinion towards reading materials, in this section the students exhibited more enthusiasm. This can be seen that the students believed that the listening materials which are taken from authentic sources would improve their skill in comprehending oral instruction in English with scale index of 80% in item 6. Furthermore, 82% of the students from the scale index agree that these materials can help them practice in comprehending the listening texts such as radio podcasts, songs, etc.

Similarly, positive perceptions are also shown by the students in taking the advantage of authentic materials in listening to help them practice their pronunciation and how to articulate certain words. It can be seen from their respond to item 8 with strong index of 79%. The students also agreed in item 9 with scale index 80% that through authentic materials they can get more examples in understanding on how to respond various situations from the listening materials. Furthermore, they also agree with 80% scale index that it can help them practice to listen to more complex conversations like in drama, film, or discussions.

Table 3. Students' Preferences on Types of Authentic Materials

Types of Authentic Materials	Total	%
Newspaper	15	30%
Magazines	40	80%
Novels	37	74%
Short stories	40	80%
Internet materials	36	72%
Reading book	29	58%
Poem	12	24%
Brochure	18	36%
Poster	33	66%
Picture/Photos	41	82%
Songs	49	98%
Films	49	98%
Radio Podcast	17	34%

First, the data from the questionnaire elaborates the students' preferences on the authentic materials to be used in the class. Table 3 describes which of the materials are most preferable and least preferable for the students.

From Figure 2, it can be seen that the students preferred authentic materials to

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be used in the class, ordered from the most to the least, films, songs, pictures/photos, magazines and short stories, novels, internet materials, reading book, poster, radio podcast, newspaper, and poem. Films and songs are at the most preferred ones with 98% students choosing them. On the other hand, poem is the least with only 24%
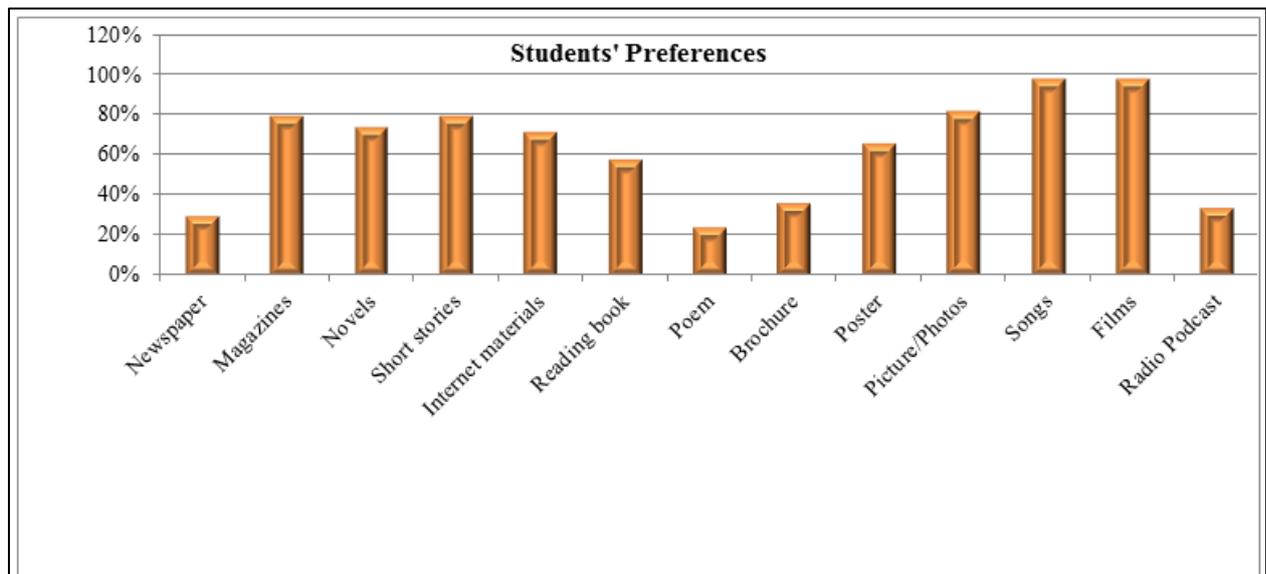

Figure 2. The Students' Preferred Types of Authentic Materials.

The Interview Results

1. **The Students' View on the Use of Authentic Materials for Reading**

There were some points why the students show very positive opinion about using authentic materials in the classroom. First, they can help improve the students' mastery on vocabulary. These materials provide various kinds of vocabulary items. One interviewee said, "*Penggunaan materi tersebut* (authentic materials) *sangat menarik. Misalnya penggunaan majalah. Bahasanya agak ringan dan isinya menarik.* [The materials (authentic materials) were very interesting. For example, in the use of magazine, the language was easy to understand and the content was attractive]" Another interviewee said, "*Ada banyak*

*contoh kosa kata yang baru saya dapatkan dari majalah atau short stories.[*There are many new vocabulary items I could get from the magazine or short stories]"

Second, authentic materials, from the students' point of view, can also help the students practice their skills in reading in daily contexts and can help them prepare their skills in reading various texts in every-day situations. "*Bisa belajar lebih banyak untuk melatih skill reading di kehidupan sehari-hari,* [I can learn more to practice my reading skills in everyday life]*"* said an interviewee.

2. **The Students View on the Use of Authentic Materials for Listening**

The students' view towards the use of authentic materials in listening activity is

quite interesting. This is considering that the scale in each point has absolutely high scale index (98%). Most of the students agreed that these materials were helpful to improve their ability to comprehend oral texts in various contexts such as commercials, radio broadcasts, or videos and songs. Besides, they also agreed that these can help them improve their understanding of various examples of daily conversation and help them practice understanding more complex conversation. As supported by one of the interviewee, "*ada banyak contoh percakapan, dan lebih bervariasi.* [There were many conversation examples, and it had more variations.]*"* Another one said, *"contoh yang ada di materi seperti itu kadang lebih kompleks, jadi bisa latihan untuk listening.*[the example given in such materials was sometimes more complex, it could be a good practice for listening]*"*

DISCUSSION

1. **The Students' Perceived Perceptions towards the Use of Authentic Materials for Reading in English Subject**

As seen on the findings of the study, most of the students perceived their perceptions positively towards the use of authentic texts in reading activities. This finding supports the previous studies (Al-Mussalam, 2009; Syafri 2011; Tanasavate; 2013, Haines, 1997; Berardo, 2006; Benavalent et.al., 2011; Al-Azri et.al., 2014). They agreed that the use of authentic materials in reading activities would improve their vocabulary mastery, help them to get used to reading, improve their understanding various texts in daily contexts, and help them practice their reading skills such as scanning, skimming, finding detailed or specific information.

Furthermore, the students preferred the certain types of authentic texts for reading activities to be used in the class. Short stories as the most preferred materials in reading. This finding was in line with the findings from Al-Mussalam (2009), Syafri (2011) and Tanasavate (2013). It means that using this type of material is much recommended. However, in this study, magazines also have the same percentage with short stories which made it as popular as short stories for the students in the school. Novel followed with 74% that made it also preferable after short stories and magazines. Meanwhile the least preferred material was poem. This supports the claim from other studies (Al-Mussalam, 2009; Syafri 2011; Tanasavate; 2013) that poem was not very recommended to supplement materials in the classroom. Hwang (2005) argued that poem was not very popular as it possessed highly stylistic language features that sometimes break language convention for aesthetical respects that made it difficult for the students.

2. **The Students' Perceived Perceptions towards the Use of Authentic Materials for Listening in English Subject**

Unlike previous research (Al-Mussalam, 2009; Syafri, 2011) that focused on the students' perceptions towards reading authentic materials, the current study involved another variable that is how the students perceived their attitude towards the use of listening authentic materials. In findings section about the students' perceptions towards the listening to authentic materials, it can inferred that these types of texts are very preferable. Most of the items scored above 80% which means that they perceived their perceptions

positively towards these materials. This is consistent with the study from Tanasavate (2013) that authentic materials other than reading such as listening materials also can affect positively to students' motivation. It can be the basis to use listening authentic materials as it can improve motivation. Since motivation is one of the factors to classroom success (William & Burden, 1997).

When facing authentic materials, students also showed more interest. From the teacher's interview, students were more enthusiastic when he used it in the class. It supported the argumentation that it can arouse students' interest (Haines, 1997) and can help them to succeed learning particular language (Azri & Rashdi, 2014).

3. Types of Authentic Materials that the Students Preferred to be Used in Future English Classes

In the questionnaire, various kinds of authentic materials were included to investigate the students' preferences for future classes. It turned out that for the reading types of authentic materials short stories and magazines were the most preferred. This confirmed previous findings from Berardo (2006), Al-Mussalam (2009), Syafri (2011), and Tanasavate (2013). In the interview section with the students, they argued that it was easier and more interesting to learn with those types since they were up to date and more meaningful. Meaningful learning is one of essential parts in teaching and learning principles as proposed by Brown (2007: 65).

For the listening types, almost all students 98% agreed to use films and songs as learning materials in the class. This is important information as recommended by Peacock (1997: 152) that teachers are encouraged using appropriate authentic materials because it can improve learners' on-task behaviours, concentration, and involvement during the lesson.

CONCLUSION
Conclusion

First, to confirm the research questions about the students' perceptions towards authentic materials for reading and listening activities, it could be inferred that most of the students have positive attitude towards the use of authentic materials. They agreed that using authentic materials would 1) demonstrate how English is used in daily communication in both written and oral forms (80%); 2) give examples of how language structures are used in daily life (80%); 3) make the lesson more interesting (77%) and they disagreed using authentic texts would make them feel frustrated and be too difficult to comprehend.

To be specific, the students agreed that authentic materials for reading activities would improve their knowledge on vocabulary items used for daily communication, help to get used to reading authentic texts, improve their ability to comprehend reading texts, help them practice reading skills such as scanning and skimming, and help them practice to understand the explicit and implicit information.

Furthermore, they also have highly positive perceptions towards authentic materials for listening like films and songs. They agreed that it would improve their skills in listening, help them practice listening to various kinds of listening materials, improve their understanding of how a word is articulated and pronunciation, improve their knowledge of how to respond various expressions and help them practice comprehending more complex conversation.

Second, on one hand, it was found that the students' top preferences for the types of authentic materials were short stories (80%), magazines (80%) and novels (74%) for reading. Meanwhile, for listening activities their top preferences were films and short videos (98%), and songs (98%). On the other hand, the least preferred ones were poem (24%) and newspaper (30%) for reading and radio podcast (34%) for listening. Therefore, these top preferences could be the best options to be used by the teacher for future class as some are more motivating that the other ones. Meanwhile, the least preferred ones could be avoided. This also confirmed the fourth research question about students' preferences on the authentic material that can be used in future classes.

Suggestion

From the conclusions, some suggestions are proposed for future studies and practitioners. First, to prospective researchers this study, a replication case study with wider scale may be conducted in different school that has lower school standard (accreditation, students' level of proficiency). There might be different perceptions towards certain types of authentic materials because the use of authentic text should match the level of students' level of proficiency.

Another replication study can also be done with different variables such as the students' motivation and engagement in the classroom to investigate deeper insights about the students' reaction towards the use of authentic materials in for classroom purposes therefore holistic results could be gained. Furthermore, elaboration of the activities used by the teacher to get the students engaged with authentic materials could be developed into other studies such

classroom action research, or quantitative studies like experimental for generalization.

Second, to practitioners, this study can be guide for materials selection and for utilizing the materials for various tasks. It is recommended to use both pedagogic book and authentic materials so that teachers could gain advantage in both curriculum achievement and the success of language learning. In addition, as drawn in the conclusion, certain types of materials are more preferred than the other types. Therefore, teachers are suggested to use particular types of texts such as short stories, magazines, novels, songs and films in order to enhance the students' engagement.

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