
THE IMPACT OF AUTHENTIC MATERIALS IN DEVELOPING LISTENING AND SPEAKING SKILLS OF THE ESL SECONDARY LEVEL LEARNERS IN KARACHI PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

English due to its greater significance is more frequently used for communication across the globe (Shamim, 2007) of the four integrated skills, listening and speaking are widely used for daily life communication. To develop the listening and speaking skills, authentic materials are used in classroom to prepare ESL learners for effective communication in real life world. Authentic materials are usually context specific, easy to comprehend and better in developing the learners' communicative skills (Guariento & Morley, 2001; Wilcox et al., 1999). This study was conducted to investigate the role of authentic materials in developing listening and speaking skills of ESL secondary level learners enrolled in Access Program aimed to target peripheries inhabited by less privileged communities of Karachi Pakistan. Access Program is a foreign funded extensive long term English Language program primarily meant for the less privileged communities with students aged between 14 to 16 years and having very low level of English language proficiency. Four ESL teachers (n=4) and twenty-five ESL learners (n=25) constituted the sample. This study adopted a mixed method approach to explore the use of authentic materials in developing the listening and speaking skills of ESL

learners. A pre-test was conducted with the intent to know the learners' proficiency level of English language. This was followed by a post-test to examine the role of authentic materials. Semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted with teachers. Data gleaned through interviews were thematically analyzed. For statistical data analysis, SPSS software was used to measure mean (M), standard deviation (SD), t-value and significant level between pre and post-test of listening and speaking. From the data analysis, it was found that authentic materials have positive impact in developing the learners' listening and speaking skills.

KEYWORDS

Authentic materials, Access program, listening skills, speaking skills

INTRODUCTION

The dominant role of the past few decades has suggested English as most popular language of the world. The learning of English language has therefore become extremely important in this multimodal digital world to facilitate communication between communities of different cultures and languages. With this significance in view, be it academia or business, media or bureaucracy, English has been the most preferred and widely used language at all public and private institutions in Pakistan (Rahman, 2010; Shamim, 2007). Various studies have reported that whenever a second language is required to be learnt, its teachings dynamics undergo also changes. Consequently, its pedagogy undergoes changes. Alongside the use of English for academic purposes, various methods and techniques are explored to use English for real life communication. To bridge this gap in learning the language and its use in any communicative context, the need of authentic material is felt. The use of these materials not only helps learning a language but allows students to gain cultural awareness of the target language, develop their communicative ability, and help them to function in a meaningful way in the target culture. Authentic resources provide an atmosphere for meaningful language practice used in the target culture (Rogers & Medley, 1988).

A variety of English language materials are used in ESL/EFL contexts. Mostly, these materials are developed to teach the grammatical aspects of English language. Due to the overarching need of English, ESL learners' access to the same language used by native speakers developed their skills to communicate in a natural way (Hart, 2003). Authentic materials serve this purpose as an alternative mode to the traditional textbooks that facilitate in learning the target language and familiarity with its culture in the classroom (Otte, 2006; Miller, 2005; Thanajaro, 2000; Guariento & Morley, 2001; Wilcox et al., 1999; Sherman, 2003; Kim, 2000). Authentic material refers to the kind of materials either created or modified from other sources and are further contextualized, exemplified and simplified with the intent to make it an easier

comprehensible source of learning (Gebhard, 2009; Tomlinson, 2013; Herod, 2002, Martinez, 2002). The example of such authentic materials are literature, music, films, newspapers, and advertisements, magazines, brochures, telephonic conversations, songs, jazz chants, radio and Television news and programs, announcements, weather forecasts and many more. Authentic Materials may be Spoken and Written as well. The former includes anything transmitted like TV ads & Commercials, plays & films, news bulletins, weather forecasts, various announcements made at airports and railway stations, talk shows, interviews etc. whereas written materials include recipes, articles, timetables, advertisements, brochures, applications, letters, and instructions for use of instruments etc. various studies have acknowledged the positive role of authentic materials (Rashid & Majid., 2014; Masood., 2013; Prodngam., 2011; 2014; Sulistyani., 2014). Authentic material promotes task based learning.

Learning is a set of communicative tasks connected to curricular goals. With this significance in view, a new trend emerged with the advent of Communicative Language Teaching particularly in ESL/EFL context. As such proficiency in speaking could be achieved by means of communication and interaction between students (Richards and Rodgers, 1986). Listening and speaking are the two most important language components that ESL learners have to develop for effective communication in the target language. Various studies have suggested ways to improve these skills. According to Wilson (2008), many ESL teachers don't help learners to develop their listening and speaking skills. He further states that when learners are exposed to only grade materials and standard language, they are unable to cope with features of authentic language such as patterns of discourse, fillers, redundancies, false starts, etc.

Although the use of authentic materials has not received enough attention for language teaching in ESL classes, it is however considered as a rich source in developing the listening/speaking skills of ESL/EFL learners. Various studies have claimed the beneficial effects of authentic materials (I-Chang., 2011; Patricia, 2015; Kochito, 2013; Rashid & Majid., 2014; Masood, 2013; Prodngam, 2011; Sulistyani, 2014). However, no study was found to have directly reported the listening/speaking skills of ESL learners. This study attempts to explore the use of authentic materials and its impact on students' listening and speaking skills in ESL classroom.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching ESL/EFL learners is one of the difficult tasks. To find appropriate ways for their learners in developing a good understanding, ESL teachers attempt to teach learners through contextualized language. In order to prepare learners for effective communication in real-life language, students are taught through authentic materials. Herrington & Oliver (2000) coined a new pedagogical term, called "authentic learning" that aims to prepare learners to face real world situations. According to Herold (2002),

authentic learning depends on the materials and activities designed to imitate real -life situations. Jacobson, E., Degener, S., & Purcell-Gates, V., (2003) assert that authentic materials are tailored for real life communication. According to Carter & Nunan (2001), authentic materials are "ordinary texts not produced specifically for language teaching purposes" (p. 68). Nunan (1989) and Jordan (1997) argue that authentic materials are designed for purposes other than to teach language. Although context specific materials are not developed specifically to be taught in the classroom, these however can be used as an excellent tool for teaching students accurately because they are authentic (Wallace, 1992: 45). According to Gebhard (2006), authentic materials include anything like print, video, and audio that students use in their routine life for communication. A variety of authentic print materials are used like utility bills, Packing slips, Order forms, ATM screens, ATM receipts, Web sites, Street signs, Coupons, Traffic tickets, Greeting cards, Calendars, Report cards, TV guides, Food labels, Magazines, Newspapers, E-books etc. Likewise auditory authentic materials include: voice messages, Radio broadcasts, Podcasts, Movies, Videos and DVDs, Television programs etc. Jacobson, Degener, and PurcellGates (2003) assert that authentic materials are used in the classrooms in the same way they would be used in real life. As compared to created materials, authentic materials are preferably used as its content reflects real use of language (Richards, 2007).

Authentic materials provide the learners with opportunities of real language in use. Even if the classrooms do not offer a "real-life" situation, authentic materials provide learners with real language. According to Nuttall (1996) states "authentic materials are encouraging because they are used to portray real life events by real people that make sense to the learners"(pp: 172). Also, authentic materials have a positive impact on the learners' achievement in developing listening, speaking, reading and writing skills (Berado, 2006; Otte, 2006; Philips and Shettlsworth, 1978; Clarke, 1989; Peacock, 1997, cited in Richards, 2001). Multiple studies have reported the beneficial effects of authentic materials in ESL/EFL contexts (I-Chang., 2011; Patricia. 2015; Kochito., 2013). It has been claimed that authentic materials develop the oral communication skills (Miller, 2005; Thanajaro, 2000). Other studies also suggest that ESL learners' functional proficiency is highly dependent on the way language is practiced in the classroom (Omaggio Hadley, 1993; Rogers and Medley, 1988). A teacher may with the help of authentic materials provide learners with the opportunities to practice language they have to use in real life communication (Grittner, 1980; Lund, 1990; Meyer, 1984; Rogers & Medley, 1988; Schmidt- Rinehart, 1994). Arguably said, authentic materials not only foster communication but equally provide an opportunity in understanding others' culture as well (Gebhard, 1996).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To explore the role of authentic materials in developing the ESL learners'

Listening / speaking skills.

2. To explore the ESL teachers' and learners' perceptions about usage of authentic materials in ESL classroom.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

1. The use of authentic materials develops the ESL learners' listening and speaking Skills.
2. Authentic materials do not improve the ESL learners' listening and speaking skills?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How could authentic materials improve the ESL learners' listening and speaking skills?
2. What are the ESL teachers' perspectives about the use of Authentic Materials in ESL classroom?
3. How ESL learners' perceive the use of Authentic Materials in ESL classroom?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted at a Government High School Karachi. A mixed method approach was adopted to explore the role of a foreign funded extensive long term English Language program that could help the ESL learners in developing their English language proficiency. These English language programs that cater to the less privileged, poor children of society are managed in schools located mostly on the peripheries of metropolis.

Sample

Intact group of twenty-five male students (n=25) aged between 13 to 16 years with a very low level of English language proficiency and four teachers (n=4) constitutes the sample of this study.

Instruments

To investigate the ESL learner's listening and speaking skills, a pre-test and post-test were conducted. Semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted with teachers in data collection. Before data collection, the following procedure was adopted.

Tool Validation

Tool for this study was developed. To determine whether each item sufficiently measures what it was meant to measure, self-validity, expert validity and pilot validity of the tool was achieved. After self-validation, a scrutiny of the tool was carried out through validation jury. The changes suggested by jury were incorporated. This was followed by pilot validation wherein the tool was administered to participants who

were not to be the sample of actual data collection. Reliability of the tool was achieved by examining consistency across responses of the participants.

Procedure

This study used action research design to collect data from intact group. In action research; the researcher's aim is to examine the possibilities of developing practical situations. Action research stems when a researcher finds gap that needs to be addressed. (Elliott, 1991; Watts, 1985; Whitehead, 1999). First, an investigative stance is adopted. It is followed by steps to understand the problem. Second, a plan is devised for some kind of interventional strategy. These strategies are called the Reconnaissance & General Plan. In the third step, the action is carried out. It involves important observations generally called Monitoring. At this stage new interventional strategies are applied called Reflection and Revision. This cyclic process continues till sufficient understanding of the problem is achieved. The research process is referred to as a recurring spiral of planning, doing, observing or evaluating and reflecting with the aim to bring positive change and understanding of the issue being probed. An example of action research protocol by Kemmis and Mc Taggart (2000) is shown in the following figure:

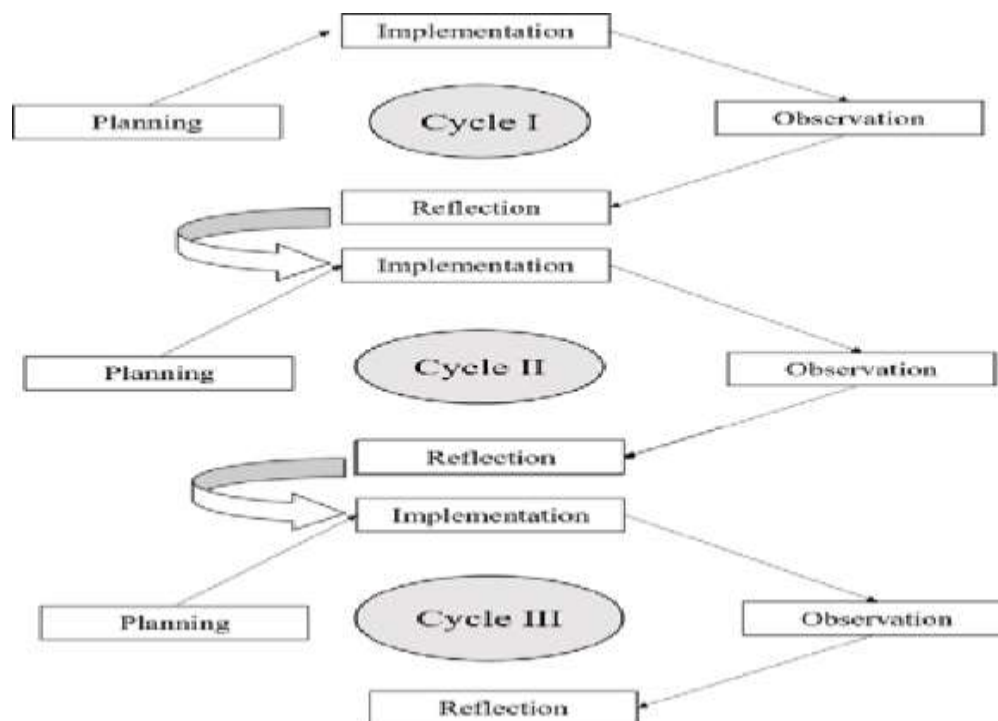


Figure3.1: Visual capturing of action research spiral (Kemmis and McTaggart (2004, p. 595)

The above figure clearly shows the repetitive nature of action research and its major steps of first of all planning followed by action, observation, and reflection. For the current research study, the same steps were used in order to get the data objectively. The detail is given in the following steps:

Planning

At the planning stage, a pre-test was prepared and administered to diagnose the students' level of listening and speaking skills. After the students were taught through authentic materials, a post-test of listening and speaking skills was then carried out to look at the effect of authentic materials on students' performance in listening and speaking skills.

Acting

In this stage, the authentic materials were used in the classroom: newspapers, magazines, articles, movies, film clips, announcements, telephonic conversations, songs, jazz chants etc.

Observation

Various activities were conducted wherein the interest and participation of the students were observed to know the attitude of students concerning the use of authentic materials.

Reflecting

After carrying out the teaching and learning activities through authentic materials, the researcher at this stage evaluated the result to see the effectiveness of the authentic materials based on Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000. A pre-test and post-test of listening and speaking skills was carried out to examine the impact of authentic materials on students' performance. The following table shows details:

Table 1: *Experiment procedure*

Pre-test	Treatment	Post- test
1 hour	24 Hours	1 hour

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Based on mixed method approach, data gleaned from four different data sources were analyzed. This included data collected through focus group interviews from ESL learners and ESL teachers. This was followed by analysis of data gathered through observations conducted to explore the student's performance. Last, quantitative data analysis of pre-test and post-test was carried out. To achieve anonymity, the participants were assigned pseudonyms. Teachers were assigned TR (teacher's

respondents) with numeral 1 to 4 whereas students were accorded SR (students' respondents) with numeral 1 to 25. Data were analyzed on the on the basis of the research questions.

Analysis of Qualitative Data

Saldana (2009) recommends coding of the data. First, an open coding of the data was conducted (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This was followed by pattern coding to distinguish similarities and patterns in data. In pattern coding, themes are compared and clustered on the basis of similarity. These clusters were further sorted until reached a saturation point (Saldana, 2009). Data collected through interviews were thematically analyzed. The following themes were emerged.

Authentic Materials are Good Source of Language Learning

The analysis of teachers and ESL learners' data revealed that authentic materials are a good source of language learning (SR, 1 & 2; SR, 3 & 5; SR, 9 & 13; SR, 21). It was argued that authentic materials help learners in learning the language with least efforts (SR, 2; SR, 5; SR, 11; SR, 18; SR, 20; SR, 23). Based on activities, authentic materials keep the learners' interest and motivation (TR1, TR2; TR3&TR4). For enhanced understanding, we believe that authentic materials are a good source of learning".

Teachers and Students' Perspectives about the use of Authentic Materials

It was discovered from data analysis that students give preference to authentic materials over a course book for many reasons: "I prefer authentic materials and there is a big reason to believe as I improved a lot through materials like newspaper, young world, listening to songs, and activities etc." (SR, 11; SR, 2; SR, 13; SR, 15; SR, 19; SR, 13; SR, 25). Similar were the views put forth by teachers as well. They prefer to use authentic materials in conjunction with course book: "course book as well materials because the use of course books is essential in ESL classrooms, authentic materials can be used to bring effective change in the classrooms" (TR1, TR2; TR3 & TR4). One of the teacher revealed, "At times both play a vital role in the clarification of concept. However, authentic material can be used for a given situation and helps in bringing ideas home to learners" (TR, 3). Another teacher added, "I prefer to use both, I think within certain parameters both have a relevance to overcome the gap left by any source" (TR, 1).

Effects of Authentic Materials

As regards the use of authentic materials, the ESL learners and teachers' responses revealed that authentic materials keep the classroom vibrant, help in students' self-motivation: "Yes it makes us to believe that we are learning with understanding like songs and jazz chants improve language skills, they are good because when we listen to songs and jazz chants we practice the songs which improve our pronunciation,

listening, and speaking as well”(SR, 2 & 7; SR, 14 & 17; SR, 20 & 22; SR, 25).. Similar were the views of teachers: “Yes all the students have an agreed approach when they were taught through authentic materials”. (TR1, TR2; TR3 & TR4).

Challenges for Teachers in using Authentic Materials

From the analysis of data it was und by ESL teachers that planning, identifying relevant materials for a particular level and demarcating authentic materials often pose challenges for the teachers(TR1, TR2; TR3 & TR4). According to the views shared by (TR2) when she was asked about challenges in the use of authentic materials in ESL classroom: “More so than often it is to determine whether the material used or provided is authentic or not. If it is adapted or even for example re-recorded, it loses its authenticity” (TR3). Another Teacher said: “for me, it’s too difficult to plan materials according the level that I am teaching and how to incorporate them and whether it will be useful or not” (TR4).Regarding challenges in the use of authentic materials: “There are certain challenges like we have prescribed course books; most often students find these books too alien to understand due to its highly technical structure and vocabulary, as such using standardized materials and authentic materials is a big challenge (TR1, TR2; TR3 & TR4)

Analysis of Quantitative Data

SPSS was used to examine mean (M), standard deviation (S.D.), t-value and significant level between listening pre and post-test and speaking pre and post-test.

Paired t-Test

To look at the difference in performance between the students listening before and after using authentic materials, a paired t-test was used to quantify means between the two test scores.

Table 2: Difference between scores of Pre and Post- Listening Tests

Construct	Pre Listening	Post Listening
Mean	22.57692308	32.07692308
Variance	118.9738462	103.1938462
Observations	26	26
Pearson Correlation	0.944320764	0.944320764
Hypothesized Mean	0	0
Df	25	25
t Stat	-13.48700207	-13.48700207
P(T<=t) one-tail	2.82255E-13	2.82255E-13
t Critical one-tail	1.708140761	1.708140761
P(T<=t) two-tail	5.64509E-13	5.64509E-13

t Critical two-tail	2.059538553	2.059538553
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Description of Mean and Std. deviation concerning pre and post listening/speaking skills is as follows:

Table 3: Mean and Std. Deviation of Pre and Post Listening/Speaking Skills

Skills	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.
Pre- Listening	25	8.000	44.00	22.5769	10.90751
Post-Listening	25	18.00	55.00	32.0769	10.15844
Pre-Speaking	25	5.00	14.00	9.0385	2.44100
Post-Speaking	26	9.00	18.00	12.9231	2.34816

A paired t-test was also used to measure the means between the two test scores of students' speaking skills:

Table 4: Difference in the scores of speaking before and after using authentic materials

Construct	Before using Authentic Materials	After using Authentic Materials
Mean	9.038461538	12.92307692
Variance	5.513846154	5.958461538
Observations	26	26
Pearson Correlation	0.886813488	0.886813488
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	0
Df	25	25
t Stat	17.33155513	17.33155513
P(T<=t) one-tail	9.61493E-16	9.61493E-16
t Critical one-tail	1.708140761	1.708140761
P(T<=t) two-tail	1.92299E-15	1.92299E-15
t Critical two-tail	2.059538553	2.059538553

Description of Mean, Standard Deviation, T-test and Sig-1 tail regarding speaking before and after using authentic materials is as follows:

Table 5: Descriptions of pre and post Listening/Speaking test

Skills	Tests	M	SD	t-test	Sig-1 tail
Listening	Pre-test	22.57	118.97	13.48	0.000
	Post-test	32.07	103.19		

Speaking	Before AM	9.03	5.95	17.33	0.000
	After AM	12.92	5.51		

Interpretation of Quantitative Data

The analysis of data has established that the students' listening skills was improved after the use of authentic materials as determined by mean value of pre-listening and post-listening skills with a range from 22.57 to 32.07 which is a significant improvement. The difference is found to be significant at 1% significance level. This shows that the use of authentic materials has improved the English language listening skills of students. The data analysis has also shown similar improvement in speaking skills. Prior to the input given through these materials, the mean was 9.03 that increased to 12.93 for the post measure indicating a significant improvement at 1% significance level. The minimum score of pre-listening was 8 whereas the minimum score of post-listening was 18. The minimum speaking score of an individual was 5 whereas the minimum score of post-speaking was 9. The highest pre-listening score was 44 whereas the upper most post-listening score was 55. The highest pre-speaking score was 9 and the greatest post-speaking score was 18. Hence, it can be established that oral skills were improved when students were taught through authentic materials. The findings also suggested that research hypothesis: H_0 = there is no considerable improvement in the students' listening and speaking skill when authentic materials are used in class was rejected on the basis of the students' listening and speaking pre- tests and post-test marks.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of data suggested the positive impact of authentic materials. Students were found to have a remarkable improvement in their listening and speaking skills: the mean value of pre and post-tests' listening score from 22.57 to 32.07 is a significant difference. This variation is found to be significant at 1% significance level. Similar was the impact of authentic materials on speaking skills. The mean-value of pre-test speaking skills was 9.03 that rose to 12.93 for the post-test which indicates a significant improvement at 1% significance level. This study found that authentic materials if put into practice in ESL classrooms will help in developing the students' language skills particularly listening and speaking skills. It was also found that ESL teachers and learners have a very positive approach in using authentic materials. Students were found comfortable and well-motivated while learning through materials comparatively easier, simplified and contextual. Based on convenient sampling, data for this study were collected from intact group ($n=25$) and four other ESL teachers ($n=4$) who taught under the same foreign funded program. The findings of this study are delimited to less privileged foreign funded schools of Karachi. Therefore these findings are not claimed to be generalized.

The insights of this study suggest the positive outcomes of authentic materials in ESL classroom that helps students in developing their language skills, particularly listening and speaking skills, as the average score of the post-listening and speaking test is much higher than the pre-listening and speaking test. Based on the observation, it was also noticed that each indicator of speaking was improved after the implementation of authentic materials. While observing the oral communication, students' pronunciation with good stress, intonation and juncture suggested an enhanced improvement in their pronunciation. From the perspective of language use, the students' views have established that the language used in ESL classroom is to a large extent different from the language used in real communicative environment. Consequently, many students face problems due to the differences between the language being used in classroom and the actual language to be used for real communication. In other words, the language they learn in the class does not make them prepared for the real life communication outside the classroom. While teaching through authentic materials in the classroom, the students felt that they were learning the real language which they can use outside the classroom in a real situation and they preferred learning language through authentic materials. The teacher may help students by providing authentic listening and oral materials into the classroom.

The availability of these materials will have a significant impact on their motivation and understanding (Schmidt-Rinehart, 1994). The study has highlighted few challenges in using authentic materials. The teachers were found to have faced challenges while using authentic materials in their classrooms. First, it is too difficult to determine whether materials developed are suitable to cater to the students' level because the prescribed textbooks are considered to meet the specific level of the students. Another challenge is distinguishing authentic materials from standard materials. According to the ESL teachers, it is quite difficult to distinguish whether the materials are really authentic or not. Another with these materials is the culture sensitivity. It is not possible to teach these materials across level of students in different classes because of cultural differences. Although, these challenges and issues are attached with the use of authentic materials, participants of this study however strongly believe in the positive outcomes of these materials to be used in every class. Concerning the implementation of authentic materials, this study argues in favor of using authentic materials. However, questions like this, why authentic materials are not widely used in language classrooms although various studies have confirmed the positive outcomes? Similar questions may be responded if the issue is highlighted to policy makers that include syllabus and curriculum designers. This might help students while considering their needs and interests to develop syllabus based on the use of authentic materials.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study found that students have improved their oral communication skill

considerably after they were taught through authentic materials. In ESL classroom, students face the target language. This study also affirms that authentic materials provide an encouraging atmosphere in the class. It was further found that various pair and group activities of listening and provide opportunities for learners to practice the target language. As such practicing this language may help them to prepare for real-life situations.

The comparative analysis of data suggested that students in classroom shall be prepared according to the language needed in real life communication. With poor language input, many students find it hard to interact orally and understand the language spoken in their immediate context. Authentic materials cover this gap on the premise that a level of difficulty is reduced with emphasis on helping learners to learn the language for real life communication. In order to prepare ESL learners to communicate effectively, teachers in ESL/EFL contexts have to make authentic materials a mandatory part of their syllabus. They also need to conduct activities with emphasis on comprehensible input so that the level of difficulty is reduced in listening and understanding others. Authentic materials provide rich input to students while listening frequently to their teachers, peers and participating in aural/oral activities. It fosters learners' autonomy and builds a good relationship among students while working in pairs and groups. The uses of authentic materials develop the students' confidence, promote self-motivation and overcome anxiety in role play, presentation, discussion and speaking with peers and teachers. In view of these positive outcomes, this study recommends the implementation of authentic materials.

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