Authentic Materials Used by English Teachers in Students' Vocabulary Mastery at the Junior High Schools

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Abstract

Authentic materials, whinch include resources such as images, photos, videos, and radio content like radio broadcasts are increasingly recognized for their effectivness in enhancing language learning, particularly vocabulary acquistion. This study aimed to explore the types of authentic materials used by English teachers in enhance students' vocabulary and examine how these materials contribute to students' vocabulary mastery. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, this research involved four English teachers at SMPI NW Mumbang as the respondents. Data were collected trought close-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, which were transcribed and analysed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed three primary types of authentic materials used by teachers including magazine articles, using film and listening to songs. Meanwhile, these materials were found to contribute significantly to vocabulary development by fostering high level of enthusiasm, increased motivation, more relevant vocabulary and high engagement attention. The study concludes that integrating authentic materials into vocabulary instruction enhances student interest and supports more effective learning. These findings underscore the importance of incorporating real-world content into English language teaching practices to improve vocabulary acquisition.

Keywords: English learning materials; Authentic materials; Vocabulary mastery; English instruction

INTRODUCTION

English has long been established as the most widely used global language, functioning as a primary medium of communication in fields such as technology, business, education, and international relations (Harmer, 2007). As Marpaung (2017) notes, English encompasses four fundamental language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—that together form the core of effective communication. Among these four skills, vocabulary plays a particularly vital role as it serves as the building block for comprehension and expression (Nation, 2001). According to Pandey et al. (2020), mastering these skills enables individuals to navigate diverse social and professional contexts confidently. Without sufficient vocabulary repertoire, students face considerable challenges in engaging in meaningful communication, comprehending texts, and following instructions, all of which are central to successful language learning.

Building on the centrality of vocabulary, it becomes essential to explore effective strategies for vocabulary instruction that go beyond rote memorization and drills. One such strategy involves the integration of authentic material resources created for real-life

communication purposes—into the language classroom. Authentic materials include, but are not limited to, images, songs, videos, newspapers, advertisements, and radio broadcasts (Gilmore, 2007). These materials allow learners to encounter the target language as it is naturally used, providing context-rich exposure to vocabulary and language patterns. According to Nunan (1999), the use of authentic materials fosters learner engagement and motivation by connecting classroom learning to the real world. Furthermore, Awaad (2018), argues that authentic materials can promote deeper cognitive processing, thereby enhancing retention and long-term mastery of vocabulary.

Transitioning from the theoretical advantages, it is equally important to acknowledge the practical benefits that authentic materials bring to the classroom setting. Research has consistently shown that authentic materials increase students' enthusiasm, motivation, and active engagement in language learning (Peacock, 1997). By engaging with real-world texts and media, learners develop not only their vocabulary but also their pragmatic and cultural awareness, which are crucial for communicative competence (Guariento & Morley, 2001). As highlighted by Mamba (2024), authentic materials enrich the learning experience by offering meaningful exposure that mirrors how language is used outside the classroom. This connection to real-life contexts fosters a more holistic language development process and supports students in becoming autonomous learners.

However, the incorporation of authentic materials is not without its challenges, particularly at the junior high school level where learners are still developing foundational language skills. Based on preliminary observations at SMPI NW Mumbang, several difficulties were identified: students struggled to understand the meaning of words in authentic contexts such as news articles or movie dialogues; they had limited basic vocabulary, making it difficult to grasp more advanced terms; and they often found audio or video materials too fast-paced or linguistically complex (Gilmore, 2007). Hossain (2024) states these challenges are typical among lower-intermediate learners, who may require scaffolding and pre-teaching strategies to benefit fully from authentic input. Moreover, Fitria (2022) emphasizes the importance of selecting level-appropriate materials and providing adequate support to maximize comprehension and learning outcomes.

While existing studies have highlighted the theoretical and motivational benefits of authentic materials, few have examined their concrete implementation in junior high school settings, particularly in rural Indonesian contexts such as SMPI NW Mumbang. This study seeks to fill that gap by providing empirical insights into how English teachers at this institution utilize authentic materials to support vocabulary acquisition.

Given these considerations, the present study aims to investigate the types of authentic materials employed by English teachers at SMPI NW Mumbang and to explore how these materials assist students in mastering vocabulary. By analyzing the instructional strategies, material selection, and student responses, this research seeks to provide insights into the practical application of authentic materials in enhancing vocabulary acquisition. Additionally, the study aims to identify both the pedagogical benefits, and the challenges associated with using authentic materials, offering recommendations for optimizing their use in English language classrooms (Nation & Webb, 2011).

Based on the background of the study above, the problem of the study is as follows:
1. What are the types of authentic materials used by English teachers in improving students' vocabularies in the learning process at the SMPI NW Mumbang?
2. In what way authentic material assists vocabulary mastery at the SMPI NW NW Mumbang?

Literature Review

The use of authentic materials in English language teaching has become a central focus in recent research, particularly regarding vocabulary acquisition at the junior high school level. Authentic materials, such as news articles, songs, and videos, are believed to create more contextual and meaningful learning experiences for students (Hafsah et al., 2024; Nurlia, 2023). These materials help bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-life communication, providing learners with opportunities to encounter language in realistic settings (Gilmore, 2007; Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

A growing body of empirical research supports the effectiveness of authentic materials in promoting vocabulary mastery, particularly when integrated with learner-centered strategies. Arifin et al. (2024) found a significant improvement in students' understanding and use of new words after engaging with authentic reading materials. Similarly, Nurlia (2023) reported that incorporating authentic procedural texts led to notable gains in vocabulary knowledge among junior high school students. Marpaung et al., (2020) also emphasized that authentic materials delivered through multimedia platforms resulted in better vocabulary retention compared to traditional methods. Additionally, Anggreni et al. (2023) demonstrated that the use of popular English songs enhanced both students' vocabulary acquisition and listening skills.

These findings collectively point to a consistent trend: authentic materials not only improve lexical competence but also create engaging and contextually rich environments that stimulate language acquisition. Alongside these benefits, the integration of technology has played an important role in maximizing the potential of authentic materials. According to Marpaung et al., (2020), multimedia-supported authentic materials not only improve vocabulary acquisition but also increase student motivation and engagement. Anggreni et al. (2023) further support this claim by showing that popular music can create a relaxed and enjoyable learning atmosphere, facilitating deeper lexical learning. Furthermore, Arifin et al. (2023) also highlights that authentic materials encourage students to actively apply vocabulary in various communicative contexts, thus promoting long-term retention and practical language use.

Despite these promising outcomes, several gaps and challenges remain in current research. Akib (2020) pointed out that students often struggle with understanding complex vocabulary and unfamiliar cultural references embedded in authentic texts. Gilmore (2007) also emphasized that lower-proficiency learners may face difficulties in processing the speed and complexity of authentic audio-visual materials. More recent studies have echoed these concerns, noting that the cognitive load of authentic content can hinder vocabulary uptake without appropriate pedagogical intervention (e.g., scaffolding, task-based activities, and pre-teaching strategies). Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to carefully select level-appropriate materials and provide adequate scaffolding to support students' comprehension and learning.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

The approach of this research is a qualitative approach that takes place in a natural setting. According to Meloeng (2010), qualitative research is research that intends to understand phenomena about what is experienced by research subjects such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, actions, holistically and employing descriptions in the form of words and language in a particular natural context and by making use of various natural methods. This study examines what authentic materials are used by teachers in teaching English to master vocabulary. This study uses qualitative research with a phenomenological approach because it is seen from the experience of English teachers who teach at the school.

Participant

This research will be carried out at SMPI NW Mumbang, a junior secondary Islamic school that provides both formal and informal education programs. The selection of research participants is critical to ensure the validity and depth of the data collected. Therefore, the sample consists of four carefully selected respondents who are actively engaged in English language teaching at the institution. Specifically, the sample includes two formal teachers—those who teach within the structured academic curriculum—and two informal teachers who contribute through non-formal educational activities such as extracurricular programs, tutoring, or community-based instruction. This distinction allows the study to capture diverse perspectives on English teaching practices across different educational settings within the same institution. To ensure participants possess adequate experience and pedagogical insight, they were selected based on two main criteria: (1) currently teaching English as a subject or core component of their instruction, and (2) having a minimum of two years of teaching experience. These criteria are intended to guarantee that respondents can offer meaningful, reflective input based on their teaching practice. By including both formal and informal educators, this study aims to generate a comprehensive understanding of English language teaching strategies, challenges, and contextual factors in SMPI NW Mumbang.

Instrument

This research employs qualitative methods, utilizing observation, interviews, and documentation as the primary instruments for data collection. These tools are chosen to capture rich, detailed, and contextual information related to the use of authentic materials in English language teaching. The research instrument is guided by two key indicators. The first indicator seeks to identify the types of authentic materials used by teachers in their instructional practices. These may include real-world texts such as newspapers, songs, videos, advertisements, or other media that reflect everyday English usage. The second indicator focuses on understanding how these authentic materials contribute to students' vocabulary mastery—specifically, how exposure to real-life language contexts enhances students' understanding, retention, and practical use of new vocabulary. The interview guide is designed to be semi-structured, allowing for a flexible and open-ended approach that encourages natural, in-depth conversation while ensuring that the core themes of the study are addressed. This flexibility is essential in qualitative research, as it accommodates the diverse experiences and perspectives of the participants. Furthermore, all interviews were conducted in the participants' native language to ensure clarity, comfort, and authenticity in responses, thereby improving the quality and reliability of the data collected for analysis.

Data Analysis

In this research, the researcher employs a descriptive qualitative approach that involves several key stages: collecting data, analyzing it, and drawing conclusions. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative analysis is not limited to post-collection processes; instead, it occurs simultaneously with data gathering, allowing for a more dynamic and responsive research process. Data analysis in this study is based on the model developed by Miles and Huberman (2002), which outlines a systematic yet flexible framework comprising three main components: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification.

The first stage, data collection, involves gathering relevant information through various methods such as interviews, observations, and documentation. These sources provide rich, in-depth insights that reflect the participants' experiences and perspectives. Once the data is collected, the next phase is data reduction. This involves selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming the data to highlight the most significant findings.

By reducing data, researchers are better able to manage the complexity and volume of qualitative information.

Following this, the data is displayed in a structured format to facilitate analysis. This can take the form of charts, tables, thematic matrices, or descriptive narratives that clearly outline key patterns and relationships. The final stage is drawing conclusions and verifying them. At this point, the researcher interprets the presented data, identifies emerging themes, and confirms the validity of findings through continuous reflection and, where necessary, comparison with existing literature. This process ensures that conclusions are grounded, meaningful, and supported by the data collected throughout the study.

RESULTS

The data was obtained in the form of tutors' record where the researcher conducted the interview directly face to face with the teachers, the observation result was in the form of list, while the tutors' data was in the form of document.

Types of Authentic Materials
Magazine Articles

Based on the observation, the researcher found that Teachers used articles from magazines article that suit students' interests and ages. These articles offer insight into diverse topics and help students understand the use of vocabulary in a deeper context. Then Teachers used magazine articles to initiate discussions in class. In addition, they often hold vocabulary quizzes based on the material. This encourages students to actively participate and test their understanding. Meanwhile, based on the interview, some subjects Magazine Articles. It is stated in the interview result as follows.

"Magazine articles offer a variety of topics that interest students, expanding their vocabulary naturally. Varied topics can trigger curiosity and more effective vocabulary learning." (P3)

"I agree. Magazine articles provide an interesting reading experience and terms that we don't always encounter in regular lessons. It helps to develop vocabulary regularly." (P4)

Using Film

Based on the observation, the researcher found that English teachers used English language film in tittle toy story as a tool to create authentic contexts. Students can see and hear the use of English in everyday situations, such as conversations, dialogue, and emotional expressions in films. Then the film is followed by a discussion session where students can talk about the film's plot, characters, and themes. This helps students to use the vocabulary they learn and talk about their experiences. Meanwhile, based on the interview, some subjects Using Film. It is stated in the interview result as follows.

" Films provide students with a powerful visual context, expanding their vocabulary through dialogue, situations, and character expressions. This helps students to understand vocabulary in a livelier context." (P4)

"I agree. Watching films brings a vocabulary that is not only limited to words, but also facial expressions, social context, and the variety of language used in real life." (P1)

Listening to Songs

Based on the observation, the researcher found that Students tend to be more motivated in English learning when they are involved in listening to music. This is due to the entertainment and interactive elements provided by this material. Then English songs are also used to expand students' vocabulary. Students listen to the lyrics of the song and

try to understand the meaning. Songs often contain vocabulary that is different from those found in everyday language. Meanwhile, based on the interview, some subjects Using Film. It is stated in the interview result as follows.

"Songs provide an opportunity to learn through the context of the music and lyrics. Through songs, students can expand their vocabulary and understand the use of words in strong emotional contexts." *(P3)*

"Yes, I agree. Listening to songs brings a diverse and sometimes more creative vocabulary than everyday language. This allows students to learn new terms in a fun way." *(P2)*

The Authentic Material Assist Vocabulary Mastery

The data was obtained in the form of teachers record where the researcher conducted the interview directly face to face with the teachers, the observation result was in the form of list, while the teachers' data was in the form of document.

High Level of Enthusiasm

Based on the observation, the researcher found that during teaching with authentic materials, students show a much higher level of enthusiasm compared to conventional teaching methods. They seem more enthusiastic and interested when interacting with authentic material. For example, they enthusiastically discuss topics taken from current news videos. Meanwhile, based on the interview, some subjects found High Level of Enthusiasm. It is stated in the interview result as follows.

"When students feel enthusiastic, they tend to be more open to trying to understand and use the vocabulary they encounter in various authentic contexts. They are more motivated to learn new words and use them in their conversations." *(P1)*

"Yes, when students feel enthusiastic about learning, students are more active in looking for new vocabulary from various sources such as films, songs or articles. Students' curiosity increases and students are more open to various materials." *(P4)*

Increased Motivation

Based on the observation, the researcher found that students seem more motivated in seeking vocabulary understanding through authentic material. They feel that the material is relevant to everyday life and can be applied in real situations. This gives them an extra boost to learn vocabulary. Meanwhile, based on the interview, some subjects found Increased Motivation. It is stated in the interview result as follows.

"High motivation is key in language learning. When students feel motivated and inspired, they are more likely to actively seek out new vocabulary from authentic sources." *(P3)*

"So true. High motivation makes students more enthusiastic in exploring authentic materials such as films, songs and articles to enrich students' vocabulary." *(P2)*

More relevant vocabulary

Based on the observation, the researcher found that Authentic use of material allows students to see vocabulary in a more real context. They can identify key words used in everyday situations, such as talking about breaking news or current topics. This makes vocabulary learning more relevant. Meanwhile, based on the interview, some subjects found More relevant vocabulary. It is stated in the interview result as follows.

"When vocabulary is taught in a context that is relevant to students' interests and daily lives, they will be more open and motivated to learn it. Relevant vocabulary tends to be easier to absorb and use in daily communication." (P1)

"Correctly. Vocabulary related to students' daily lives makes students more interested and tends to be better at remembering and using these words." (P2)

High Engagement and Attention

Based on the observation, the researcher found that Students appear more engaged and focused during instruction with authentic materials. They showed high interest in participating in discussions, watching videos, and discussing celebrity interviews. This creates an active and engaging learning environment. Meanwhile, based on the interview, some subjects found High Engagement and Attention. It is stated in the interview result as follows.

"High engagement and attention of students to the material allows them to be more focused and open to absorbing new vocabulary. When they are actively engaged, they are more likely to understand and remember the words they learn." (P4)

"I agree. When students are truly engaged in the material, students are more focused and could grasp more of the vocabulary being taught." (P3)

Discussions

The findings of this study reveal that English teachers at SMPI NW Mumbang use a variety of authentic materials magazine articles, films, and songs to support students' vocabulary mastery. These materials are specifically chosen to align with students' interests and developmental levels, making vocabulary learning more engaging and relevant. This approach is consistent with prior research highlighting the effectiveness of authentic materials in promoting language learning in real-world contexts (Gilmore, 2007; Richards & Schmidt, 2010). Magazine articles offer students exposure to diverse topics that align with their interests and developmental levels, thus fostering natural vocabulary expansion. These materials were selected to match the interests of students at SMPI NW Mumbang, making vocabulary learning more engaging and relevant. Recent studies by Nurlia (2023) and Hafsa et al. (2024) confirms that engaging reading materials increases students' lexical knowledge and enhances their reading motivation. Additionally, Guo (2012) emphasizes that authentic texts stimulate curiosity, which is crucial for deep processing and retention of new vocabulary.

Transitioning to film, another commonly used authentic material at SMPI NW Mumbang, provide students with vivid visual and auditory input that helps them understand vocabulary in real-life communicative settings. The use of films in vocabulary instruction at SMPI NW Mumbang mirrors findings from Ashcroft et al. (2018), who report that films significantly boost incidental vocabulary acquisition and listening comprehension. Similarly, Rajpopat (2023) highlights that film-based learning strengthens learners' emotional connection to language, which enhances vocabulary retention. The multimodal nature of films combining visual cues, dialogue, and social interaction—supports learners' comprehension and deepens their contextual understanding of language (Sarıçoban et al., 2016).

Songs also play a significant role in vocabulary development at SMPI NW Mumbang, motivating students by exposing them to varied and creative vocabulary. This aligns with Bokiev et al. (2018), who found that songs foster emotional engagement, making students more receptive to learning new words. Furthermore, Al-Hamdun et al. (2024) found that integrating music into lessons provides students with exposure to

idiomatic and colloquial expressions, often absent from traditional textbooks. This is consistent with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, which suggests that positive emotional states, such as those induced by music, lower the learner's affective filter and promote better language acquisition (Krashen, 1992).

The study also revealed several key benefits of using authentic materials in vocabulary mastery at SMPI NW Mumbang: high enthusiasm, increased motivation, more relevant vocabulary, and greater engagement. These outcomes directly address how authentic materials assist students in mastering vocabulary. Notably, students showed increased enthusiasm and engagement when interacting with authentic materials, which aligns with research by Mohammadi (2017), who found that learners engaged with authentic tasks are more eager to practice and apply new vocabulary. Motivation, a critical factor in language learning, has been consistently linked to the use of authentic resources, which learners perceive as meaningful and directly applicable to their lives (Gilmore, 2007).

In addition to fostering enthusiasm, the relevance of the vocabulary learned through authentic materials was another major theme identified in this study. For students at SMPI NW Mumbang, authentic materials made vocabulary more relevant and functional by connecting it to real-life language use. Research by Sari et al. (2020) emphasized that authentic materials expose students to up-to-date, real-world language, making the vocabulary they learn more memorable and applicable. Moreover, studies have shown that students who encounter vocabulary in meaningful, context-rich settings tend to develop deeper lexical competence and better long-term retention (Webb & Rodgers, 2020).

Finally, high levels of engagement and attention were observed during the use of authentic materials, creating an interactive and focused classroom environment at SMPI NW Mumbang. This engagement was evident in classroom dynamics, where students actively participated in discussions, films, and song-related activities. This finding is supported by Ali et al. (2022), who highlight that authentic media such as videos and interviews significantly enhance learners' classroom participation and focus. Additionally, Namaziandost et al. (2022) demonstrated that students engaged in authentic tasks are more likely to internalize vocabulary and apply it in both oral and written communication.

The findings of this study strongly support the integration of authentic materials in English language teaching at SMPI NW Mumbang to enhance vocabulary mastery. The results demonstrate that materials such as magazine articles, films, and songs play a key role in improving student engagement, motivation, and vocabulary retention. By exposing students to real-world contexts, these materials provide meaningful opportunities to encounter and retain new vocabulary. To optimize their use, it is crucial that teachers are not only trained to select appropriate resources but also to implement strategies that facilitate vocabulary learning in authentic settings. Curriculum designers should prioritize developing materials focused specifically on vocabulary development, while ensuring teachers are equipped with the tools to incorporate real-world language exposure into their lessons. Professional development programs should aim to equip educators with the skills to create dynamic, interactive vocabulary-focused lessons that support student retention and long-term vocabulary acquisition.

CONCLUSION

The researcher presents a summary of the research findings by addressing the research problem outlined at the beginning of the study. Based on the data collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, it was found that English teachers at SMPI NW Mumbang implemented four distinct types of authentic materials in their teaching practices. These materials include online news articles, magazine excerpts, film

content (such as movie scenes or clips), and English-language songs. Each of these materials was purposefully selected for its real-world relevance and potential to expose students to natural language use in context. The use of authentic materials is intended to simulate real-life communication and provide students with meaningful language input beyond traditional textbook content.

Furthermore, the researcher identifies several key findings regarding how these authentic materials contribute to vocabulary mastery. First, the use of real-world content sparked a high level of enthusiasm among students, making the learning environment more dynamic and enjoyable. Second, it significantly increased students' motivation to learn English, as they found the materials relatable and engaging. Third, authentic materials helped introduce and reinforce more relevant and practical vocabulary, aligning closely with how language is used in everyday situations. Lastly, the integration of these materials enhanced students' attention and engagement during lessons, as they were more likely to focus on and interact with content that was interesting and applicable to their lives. These findings underscore the effectiveness of authentic materials in promoting both linguistic competence and learner motivation in vocabulary acquisition.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on this study result, the researcher proposed some suggestions to the following parties. This research shows that the found types of authentic materials used by English teachers. Therefore, from this research, the English teachers will gain more understanding related to the authentic material, then the researcher suggested that the English teachers find the authentic material assist vocabulary mastery that can help learners to learn better and to improve the student's vocabulary mastery. In addition, this research can be used as the reference for future researchers, where the future researchers are suggested to conduct a study about authentic material in a different setting, it can be in reading, writing or other skills that they are interested in. Then the researcher suggests to further researchers to use more complete instruments on observation sheets and interviews. As well as the most important part, further research needs to update and complement the previous research section and use stronger theory.

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