

## **Relevance of Authentic Materials to the Attention Span of Adult Learners in English Language Classes in Pakistan**

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### **Abstract**

This article assesses the relation of authentic materials to the attention span of adult students in English language classes in Pakistan. It determines the advantages of authentic materials and points out what care and caution need to be taken while using them to obtain their maximum benefit. A literature review of the problem is presented first enumerating the advantages of authentic materials in an English language class, and then several strategies are suggested to get the best outcome from their use. Both qualitative and quantitative research tools have been administered in this research to get the relevant data. Since the problem of sustaining students' attention in class especially in EFL classes has been the topic of concern, the qualitative tool helps find out that the right kind of authentic materials depending on various factors including the situation, the learners and the topic as well as the art of exploiting authentic materials in the class help extend students' attention span and make teaching and learning successful. The quantitative tool helps in determining that use of authentic materials is not resisted by the learners, and teachers consider them a great help in making teaching/learning process a fun. This paper concludes that by incorporating authentic materials in English language teaching in Pakistan, a great many positive changes can be brought in the English language curricula being taught at all levels in Pakistan. It recommends the teachers, administrators, policy makers and syllabus designers to focus on sustaining learners' attention with the best use of authentic materials to optimize their learning in an ESL class. This paper is a building block for future research on the issue of the use of authentic materials in English language classes. The culture of the college classroom, teaching and learning could be transformed towards betterment by funding the researchers to focus on this issue.

**Keywords:** *authentic materials, adult learners, attention span, ELT*

### **Introduction**

English still has an important role in Pakistan, even though it is soon to be replaced by Urdu as the official language. All Pakistani interests across the world are addressed through this language. Moreover, it is the language of higher learning especially in the fields of medicine, science and technology. The researcher has noticed with concern that many of our

students, even those with advanced degrees, are unable to tackle basic proficiency tests such as IELTS or TOEFL with confidence.

The main reason for this serious lack of target language proficiency could be that they are taught far-fetched fables, pastoral poetry and stories specially written in the context of History of Islam and Pakistan, but the functional aspect of the language is ignored. Structures of English are taught through the traditional Grammar Translation Method (GTM), (refer to Punjab Text Book Board Intermediate English Book 1 & 3). The point to be noted is that the policy makers in Pakistan still seem to think that the language will come by itself as a by-product of teaching literature.

Another dilemma of ELT in Pakistani context is the erroneous treatment of course books by most teachers. In the first place, even the courses do not, as such, provide the teacher any support. For instance, the Textbook of English for class XI, National Book Foundation (2004), has exercises at the end of every short story with total disregard to the content of the story and no co-relation with subsequent class activities. The first lesson carries exercises on Nouns, the second on the Present Perfect Tense, the third on the use of Adverbs and Present Perfect Tense and so on. This lack of logic in the teaching tools or aids and materials neutralizes whatever motivation the students might have had in the beginning. They are left with high affective filters even if they are pushed to sit in the class through institutional force and other factors. These typical examples are quite sufficient to make it clear why Pakistani learners knock at the doors of language centers and language universities. Enrollment in the courses of the National University of Modern Languages, for example, can run as high as two thousand adult learners annually.

The researcher has witnessed the phenomenon (not without agony) of how learners, mostly in Government institutions, sit with dull, blank faces and remain uninvolved in the teaching. The old-fashioned lecturing system has much to do with this. Students become passive and inattentive.

In an informal round of observations in colleges in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, the researcher noted that many language teachers were not even using the blackboard or whiteboard, let alone advanced teaching aids. No authentic materials were in evidence to inculcate real language skills. With some in-depth discussion and intimate interaction, the researcher was able to form insights into the issue at hand. The variable discussed and explored here is the use of authentic material. An effort is made to explore what difference the use of authentic materials can make in arresting and extending the learners' attention span.

## Review of Literature

Taking the term semantically at the outset, authentic simply means original, genuine, natural or not artificial. Though it also has a connotative meaning of authority but in ELT terminology an authentic text is the one whose primary intent is to communicate meaning from native speakers of the language (Swaffar, 1985). For the present study the same has been accepted.

Two elements mainly determine the authenticity of the teaching material. The first is the text, written, spoken or sound-recorded that comes from a native speaker of English for the listeners or readers. The second is the purpose of the text which means manipulation or exploitation of the material under the use that can help the learners to seek guidance for their immediate needs, not only in the classroom but also in real life situations for practical purposes. In a nutshell, both the content of the text as well as its purpose make it authentic (Purcell-Gates, 2003). In a language class, these two aspects are to be considered important while selecting materials for teaching.

Researchers define authentic materials in many ways. Peacock (1997) defines authentic materials as “(those) that are produced to fulfill some social purpose in a language community.” Widdowson (1990) contends that authentic material would be that which is designed for learners of English and used in the classroom in a way similar to the one it was designed for. Morrow (1977) asserts that an authentic text is a stretch of real language produced by real speakers or writers for real audiences, and designed to convey a real message of some sort. Spelleri (2002) contends that authentic materials refer to any items for the general community and not specifically for the ESL community. According to these definitions, news articles or radio/TV bulletins of the Pakistani media would not fall in this category. There is no certainty that what is being offered is close to the kind of speech or writing produced by native speakers.

There are many other issues regarding the nature or use of authentic materials. First, the tension between native and non-native is less severe now than it used to be, as the World Wide Web is an immense library of authentic materials for the language learning classroom. Of course, all the material available on the www is not necessarily uploaded by native English speakers. However, most of it lies within acceptable limits. Second, it is not clear whether we are dealing with authenticity of task, or authenticity of situation (Taylor, 1994). The question of bringing in something authentic in the class raises doubts in teachers’ minds whether

the classroom itself is unauthentic. Breen (1985) talks of four types of authenticities:

1. Authenticity of the text which may be used as an input data for our learners
2. Authenticity of the learners' own interpretation of such text
3. Authenticity of the task conducive to language
4. Authenticity of the actual social situation of the language classroom

Breen includes almost everything in the term, but Taylor (1994) points out that authenticity is a relative term and its different aspects can be found in different degrees. Widdowson (1979) clarifies the ambiguity to some extent by saying that authenticity is not a quality residing in instances of language, but a quality which is bestowed upon them and is a created response of the receiver. Authenticity is to be realized in the act of interpretation. Theorists seem generally convinced that texts may be undisputedly authentic if they are written or spoken by native English speakers even if not for the purpose of language teaching.

Third, many theorists doubt the use of the material in language classroom in a way that makes it artificial or unauthentic. Taylor's (1994) arguments help to resolve this uncertainty. He discards the view that the classroom is an artificial place that affects the authenticity of the material used. A classroom is a place where authentic materials are used for authentic or real purposes in life. Taylor also suggests that learners are somewhat like theater-goers who willingly suspend their disbelief (Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*) and learn practical lessons of life from the plays they watch. Learners can similarly create an aura of authenticity for themselves in the classroom; they know the difference between learning a language and using it.

Finally, it is not what kind of text we have that matters but how we use it. It is the purpose that determines the authenticity of the text. For example, letter writing is a typical activity in a language classroom. However, if a letter produced by this exercise is not post-able (to coin a term); the activity falls short of the ideal of authenticity. Learners should not only be told the techniques and methods of skills or sub skills of language to be learnt or used, they should be invited to understand both the underlying logic of the activity on one hand, and its real functions on the other. Only then an activity of this nature can be termed authentic in the sense that Gates *et al.* (2003) have defined. Nevertheless, if an actual restaurant menu is brought in the class and learners are asked to select food items within a specific amount, both the menu as well as the subsequent activity may be considered authentic; if the second condition

of applicability in real-life situations beyond the classroom is addressed, the activity comes into the category of authentic teaching.

The use of authentic materials for learning is not something conceived by language teachers only. It has some grounding in well-conceived theories dating back to Descartes with his “I think, therefore I am” stance. Cognitivists tell us that it is the mind of the learner that possesses and processes everything. Recent studies have revealed that knowledge and learning are closely linked with context. Wilson (1993) contends that authentic activity involves situations in which actual cognitive processes are generated, rather than simulations of the kind employed in schools. Perhaps that is one reason for the rise of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Authentic materials offer learners opportunities to create and recreate their own curricula under the supervision of the teacher.

There may be diverse purposes for language teaching in the minds of teachers, course devisers and policy-makers of pre-school, school and other forms of formal and professional educational systems. But, regardless of policy, two main purposes tend to motivate the average adult when she or he comes to the English class. The first is to learn English for immediate and real needs (these may vary from person to person), and the second is to adapt to a new community, which could be because he or she works in a multi-national set-up, or has migrated to an English-speaking country. Spelleri (2002) is right in saying that it is impossible to separate linguistic needs from the learner’s survival needs. Language is a tool, not an end in itself. Authentic material is useful because it goes beyond matters of structure and vocabulary to the provision of working implements for real life situations.

Authentic materials dispel the impression from the mind of the adult learner that s/he is in the class to read a particular text. On the basis of his practical experience with the classes of English language learners of Mexican immigrants, Delgado-Gaitan (1987) shares his view that generally adult learners, when given a text book to read, presume that they are supposed to do academic reading. Therefore, a new trend of giving more value to the reader is emerging; text is less significant than the immediate needs of the reader or the adult learner. Thus, any understandable text, written or spoken, that may interest the learners in the class and that can help with practical needs, is authentic. In this regard, Ashley Hasting and Brendra Murphy (2002) contend that most of the materials that ordinary people seek for entertainment and enlightenment are authentic. Such material is also useful in stretching the attention span of the learners because it is interesting. A movie, documentary, dialogue, TV talk, news bulletin, comic, magazine, editor’s column, restaurant menu or instruction

manual could thus be included in the category. With this in view, we can say that almost every book lying on the shelves of our library is authentic in its own right. However, the right of the learner is the real test and determinant of authenticity.

The use of authentic materials enlivens the classroom. Language teachers can bring to the classroom a variety of interests. Teachers are also educators, so education and general development are part of their responsibilities (Sanderson, 1999). Not only are the changing trends of life reflected through authentic materials, but language change is also reflected in the materials. Learners and teachers can keep abreast of those changes.

It is pertinent here to discuss Literature as a source of authentic materials, because the main content of English language teaching in Pakistan is taken from literature. Mostly adults in Pakistan do not come to the class to experience the subtleties of charged language or refined styles of language. Their primary concern is to develop communication skills that can serve them in life beyond the classroom. They may come to attend English language class, for instance, to be able to respond to the complaints, feedback letters and other missives issued by their children's teachers and school administration or to be able to look for better jobs, draft good employment letters or master interview skills, but not to acquire a fastidious taste for poetry or fiction. Selections must be made carefully with practical end purposes in mind.

Media can help in teaching language skills. Language proficiency implies integration of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. According to one estimate (Burely, 1995) we spend more than 40 per cent of our time in listening, about 35 per cent in speaking, nineteen per cent in reading and only about five per cent in writing. Pakistani students do a lot of listening—our authoritarian classroom attitudes do not encourage participation, so they are expected to sit still and listen to the teacher talking for long stretches of time. However, their competence in this skill usually remains poor, partly because they are not really listening (at least, not attentively) and partly because the models of English presented in the average classroom are sub-standard, exhibiting marked interference from the first language in delivery and structure. Students fail to achieve good bands in IELTS, for instance, because of inadequate exposure to authentic listening texts. It is observed that many (if not all) Pakistani immigrants in the UK learn listening skills in a few months of exposure to native speech. For our English language class, BBC World, VOA, CNN, etc. are some useful and easily accessible sources. Learners may be advised to practice listening through these media beyond the classroom. Compared to what students get in ordinary schools, the functional courses offered by the National

University of Modern Languages, Islamabad are more effective in inculcating authentic listening skills by including authentic materials such as cassette recordings/CDs of *What to Say*, *Getting on in English*, *Choosing Your English* and *Going to Work* in English Language Teaching.

The textbooks prescribed by planners in boards and universities in Pakistan are not revised for years, whereas world trends and supporting data keep on changing day by day. A book being taught at the Intermediate level in Pakistan contains facts and figures in two essays, "Hunger and Population Explosion" by Anna Mackenzie and "China's Way to Progress" by Galeazzo Santini, that were valid in 1973 at the time of the first edition. They are still being taught in a drastically changed world. This kind of material creates barriers in learning and makes the classroom dull or even embarrassing, thus exacerbating negative affective factors.

Authentic materials help developing an understanding of life and culture thereby preparing students to have a practical approach to life. Maria Spelleri (2002) opines that with the help of authentic materials, three things are embedded, namely, language learning, cultural insight and practical application. She is also of the view that it enriches the learners' understanding and is useful for them in real life. In Pakistan, for example, there is the undesirable practice of teaching letter-writing with fictitious names of persons and places, like city ABC and person XYZ. This erroneous and unauthentic way of teaching can result in ridiculous incidents when learners are seen using unconsciously the same thing in their practical life. Chrissa Ahstrom (2003) shares her experience of teaching maps and directions in the class in their original shape. She narrates that once her students, Mexicans, were asked to draw directions to their homes, and the whole class practically used one learner's work when she invited the class over for dinner.

Many other practical advantages of the use of authentic materials in the class have been noticed and observed in recent times. One language learner expressed her views after completing a literacy course that a newspaper had been a horrible pile of papers before but turned to be an object full of interest (LPALS study program, Purcell-Gates, 2003). The discerning teacher is guided by learners as well as situations: given a chance, the most desirable content finds its own level in the class, and the most desirable results are produced through this contextualized approach in teaching. The use of authentic materials promotes openness, liberty and the spirit of democracy where all voices are duly heard. Prescribed books are formal in tone and hardly carry day to day scenes of the cities and streets. Authentic materials keep the teachers and the learners in touch with changing trends of life. Latest editions of newspapers, or radio and TV programs keep the interest alive and the motivational level of adult

learners high. Without the relevance factor, the attention span of students is likely to be short. Contrived material or dead information cannot be expected to hold their attention for a pedagogically productive length of time.

It is tempting to select materials that are learner-contextualized, but some risk is involved. One cannot form many judgements about English language learners from the level assessment test or short interview given prior to their placement in a program. The more you get involved with your learners, the more you realize their contextual needs. It demands a lot of patience to understand the context of each learner. The difficulties are exacerbated in dealing female learners in co-education classes in a Muslim society where females have their peculiar socio-psychological problems. Most Pakistani adult learners lack speaking skills and find it difficult to explain what is going on in their minds. However, L<sub>1</sub> may be used for this purpose, provided the teacher knows the same language. If we develop a culture in the class that promotes learners' interest, it may turn out to be an additional burden for the teacher. The planning of the teacher and the learners may go in opposite directions. For instance, very often one comes in the class with enough tools, plans and materials ready for a whole teaching session, but the learners wish to talk about hot issues. This is a common experience in Pakistani adult classes where an unstable political scene often stimulates learners more than other practical skills. On such occasions, teachers need to be vigilant and imaginative to exploit the situation in a tactful manner, but the end product is rewarding. Student participation is enhanced, attention is maintained and motivation tends to remain high.

Human interests are also diversified and unlimited in number. A teacher may think that filling in a passport application form is a valuable skill to practice in the class, but there may be some learners in the same class who know that they will never need a passport. In their research study, Erik Jacobson and his associate researchers opine that transferring skills, however, between contexts is extremely difficult and rarely accomplished by learners to the degree often assumed by the educators (NCSALL, 1995).

The level of difficulty of the text is also a barrier. It needs to be explained and simplified during the prior brainstorming talk so that the learners may not lose all interest in the text. Purcell-Gates (2003) opines that the level of difficulty of the text is not only a problem for the learners but, at times, the teachers also find themselves struggling with the materials. She has also advised teachers to take into account what she calls the instrumental, regulatory, interactional, personal, heuristic, imaginative

and informational needs. Coming up to this standard is, of course, a great challenge for an English language teacher.

It is true that English language teachers, rather all teachers, must work hard to produce desirable results but the teaching strategy involving the use of authentic materials does, in fact, put pressure on the teacher. Selecting, grading, streamlining and operating authentic materials in the class are not as simple they seem to be at first thought.

## Methodology

In order to analyze the role of authentic materials in arresting the attention span of English language learners, the researcher used the following questionnaire combining the quantitative tool viz., survey items 1 & 2 and qualitative tool viz., Interview Questions 1, 2, 3 & 4.

Quantitative Tool	Survey Items
I.	Using authentic materials in your English language class is resisted by the learners as they think that it is not important from examination point of view and it delays completing the course.
II.	Without the use of authentic materials in the language classroom, teaching/learning starts getting dull and boring and learners' attention span breaks time and again as a result the teacher has to exert more energy to keep the learner focused.
Qualitative Tool	Interview Questions
I.	How can authentic materials used in the classrooms stretch the attention span of the learners and make learning experience more interesting and lower their affective filter?
II.	Do you agree that without the use of authentic materials in the language classroom, teaching/learning starts getting dull and boring and learners' attention span breaks time and again as a result the teacher has to exert more energy to keep the learners focused?
III.	How can authentic materials keep the learners involved and motivated in the learning process?
IV.	Do you agree that using authentic materials in your English language class is resisted by the learners as they think that it is not important from examination point of view and it delays covering up the course?

## Quantitative Tool

In order to get the quantitative data on the research question "How can authentic materials used in classrooms stretch the attention span of the learners and make learning experience more interesting and

lower their affective filter?" Survey items 1 (Using authentic materials in your English language class is resisted by the learners as they think that it is not important from examination point of view and it delays completing the course.) & 2 (Without the use of authentic materials in the language classroom, teaching/learning starts getting dull and boring and learners' attention span breaks time and again as a result the teacher has to exert more energy to keep the learner focused.) were designed to determine the side effects of the use of authentic materials and the harms of not using them while imparting the language skills in the learners. The responses of the target population viz., the teachers determined the effectiveness of such teaching tools which supposedly engage the learners and make them participative and involved in the class activities. The possible side effects of using authentic materials mentioned were that using them in your English language class was resisted by the learners as they thought that they were not important from examination point of view and they delayed completing the course. The possible disadvantage of not using authentic materials in the class discussed in survey item 2 was that without the use of authentic materials in the language classroom, teaching/learning would start getting dull and boring and learners' attention span would break time and again as a result the teacher would have to exert more energy to keep the learner focused.

The scale used for these survey items was five point Likert scale. The results on these survey items were analyzed with the help of bar charts. Chi-square test was applied to them all in order to find the association or independence of the attributes since the survey was given to the teachers teaching English as language and those involved in teaching English as subject.

### **Sampling for Research Survey**

For collection of the data based on the statements mentioned above, the survey was distributed to 200 teachers in the following fashion:

Table 1: Sampling of Teachers from Universities

<b>Language Teachers</b>	<b>No of Respondents</b>
National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad	80
International Islamic University, Islamabad	10
Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2: Sampling of Teachers from Government Colleges

<b>Subject Teachers</b>	<b>No of Respondent</b>
Islamabad Model College for Boys, H-8, Islamabad	12
Islamabad Model College for Boys, H-9, Islamabad	12
Islamabad Model College for Boys, F-10/4, Islamabad	6
Islamabad Model College for Boys, G-6/3, Islamabad	9
Islamabad Model College for Boys, F-8/4, Islamabad	10
Islamabad Model College for Boys, G-10/4, Islamabad	9
Islamabad Model College for Boys, I-10/1, Islamabad	9
Government Degree College, Satellite, Rawalpindi	9
Government Gordon College, Rawalpindi	14
Government Asghar Mall College, Rawalpindi	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

### **Quantitative Data Analysis**

Use of authentic materials in relation to adult learners' attention span in English language class creates many crucial and critical questions. The concern in this research article is to verify whether there are any risks or advantages involved especially from psychological perspective in the use of authentic materials in English language classroom. However, the reaction and response of the adults who are exposed to the authentic materials for the first time in their education is also important since in most of the cases, the adult learners have earlier been tuned and trained in a completely different manner. Therefore, there is a dire need of reflection upon the use or lack of authentic materials in Pakistani curricula of English in general but the classroom tactics in dealing with the authentic materials in the adult English language classroom in particular. It is hoped that this portion of the research paper will be of help for the fellow researchers, the classroom practitioners, the course designers and the policy makers alike.

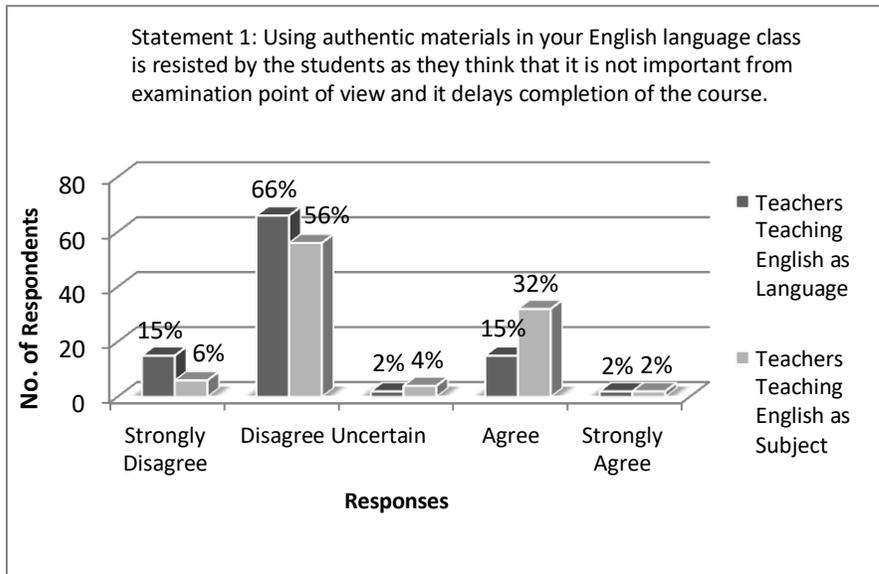


Figure 1: Distribution of Teachers' Responses to Statement 1

Since the calculated value of chi-square = 8.72 (see appendix) is more than the critical value of 5.991, the null hypothesis  $H_0$  is rejected. It means that the teachers teaching English as language and the teachers teaching English as subject have different opinion about the proposition.

Using authentic materials is always useful as it makes the linguistic inputs more comprehensible. This proposition was put in the survey item-1 due to the hypothesized apprehension that our exam system makes the teachers work on the textual contents only from examination point of view. It does not allow them to use authentic materials in their language class as learners resist it declaring it unimportant from examination point of view. Some teachers also think that it delays completion of the course.

However, if the authentic materials are used to supplement the course and text book and move around the learners' needs to direct the language proficiency enhancement and language skills development, they are neither resisted by the teachers nor by the learners. The survey results clearly point out the accuracy of this analysis as 15% language teachers and 6% subject teachers strongly disagreed, 66% language teachers and 56% subject teachers disagreed with the proposition.

The difference in the opinions of language teachers and the subject teachers is mainly due to the majority of subject teachers showing uncertainty. If the number of agreeing and disagreeing respondents is focused, it becomes clear that there is not much difference in the opinions of language teachers and subject teachers. On both sides, the agreeing respondents are more in number. Thus we can conclude that majority of

the teachers (may they be teaching English as language or as subject) think that the use of authentic materials is resisted by the learners as they find them of no use for their exams. This leads to another conclusion that the teachers are aware of Pakistani learners' psyche that they all the time keep thinking about their exams and do not concentrate on their studies in the class as a means to develop them communicatively and linguistically. Rather passing in exams and getting good grades is their only desire.

Here we come to realize the need to change the overall psyche of the whole society. It needs to be reformed to the direction of accepting education as a means of developing some skills in the learners, and not a petty means of getting a piece of paper (degree) to get the job/appreciation from the people around. The society is to be revolutionized so that the individuals are able to appreciate the competence reflected in the everyday performance and not in the degrees only. At the same time, there is a need to change the syllabus taught and assessment system practiced as well. Only in this way, the adult learners will appreciate and get motivated to make the best use of the aids and authentic materials in making themselves linguistically competent. Linguistic inputs provided to them in the class will also become more comprehensible since their attention span will be properly arrested.

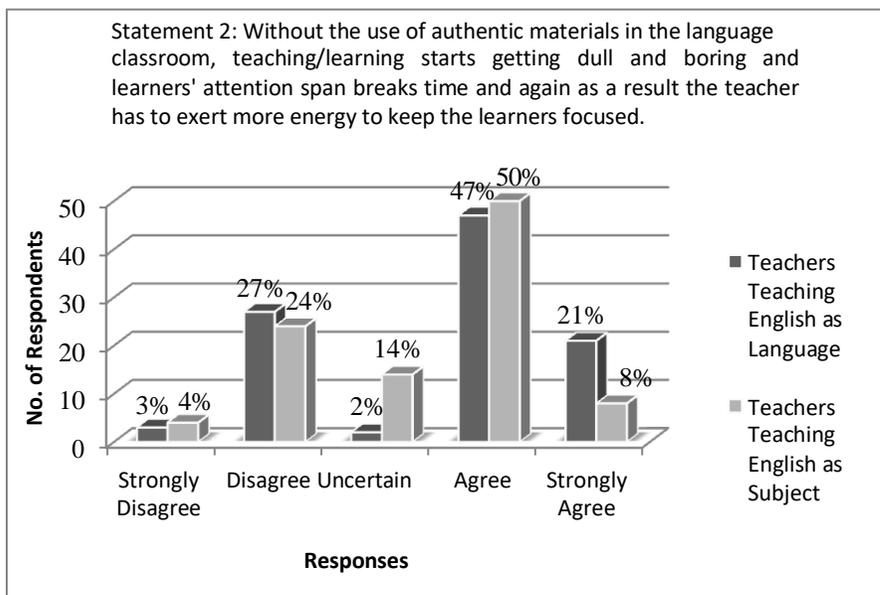


Figure 2: Distribution of Teachers' Responses to Item-2

Since the calculated value of  $t = 9.86$  (refer to appendix) is more than the critical value of 5.991, the null hypothesis  $H_0$  is rejected. It means that the teachers teaching English as language and the teachers teaching English as subject have different opinion about the proposition.

Teaching aids like authentic materials in the language class make the teaching job easy, systemic and impressive, and also keep the learners focused, involved and motivated. The proposition was designed with the hypothesis in opposition to the teachers who take authentic materials as attention-diverting agents rather than facilitating tools. Such teachers take themselves as the most important authentic materials. What is hypothesized then is that without the use of authentic materials, teaching/learning starts getting dull and boring and learners' attention span breaks time and again. As a result, the teacher has to exert more energy to keep the learners focused.

3% of language teachers, 4% of subject teachers strongly disagreed, 27% language teachers and 24% subject teachers disagreed. It does indicate that mere authentic materials are not enough. They are not enough if the teachers are not trained to make effective and productive use of them. These sections of the teachers need to be given in-service training. Same goes with 2% uncertain language teachers and 14% uncertain subject teachers. Apart from these responses, a teeming majority of teachers from both sides have accepted the proposition and have shown like mindedness.

### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

The following is the gist of discussions based on interviewees' responses to the four interview questionnaire items mentioned in the methodology part. Ten teachers were interviewed, five teaching English as language and five teaching English as subject. The language teachers were taken from National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad and subject teachers were taken from Federal Government colleges.

Authentic materials and modern teaching aids have always been considered helping tools especially in language classes. These, in fact are the sources of stretching adult learners' attention span. Besides bringing an element of newness and freshness to arouse students' interest, authentic materials, *realia* and other teaching aids also bring the learners in close contact with the language as it is used in real life. In this way, these materials not only bring fun in the class but also make the learners learn by doing. The teachers' job also becomes easier as a result. Ms. A.H. says, "Nowadays as teachers we are trying to apply as many modern teaching techniques as possible and even we are surprised at the positive outcome at times." Mr. Z.B. is of the view, "Authentic materials enhance the practicality aspect or utility aspect of learning." Mr. A.H. says, "The audio visual aids bring a lot of fun and life to your class . . . the students are involved and they learn by doing things. They actually use language in a constructive way."

No educational system can be perfect. Every educational institution needs to revise and update its syllabus and policies on regular basis. Realizing that there are some deficiencies in the syllabus of an ongoing course, the teacher finds it his/her responsibility to make up for this through some technique or strategy. Authentic materials seem to offer a great help in this regard. Ms. S.J. comments, "Our syllabus in colleges is not perfect. A lot of things are out-dated and boring. Some parts are very difficult for the students . . . *realia*, extra materials and authentic materials prove to be a blessing for teachers in such situations. They help teachers make difficult things easier . . . and boring parts interesting." Mr. A.H. says, "If students are bored in class or the drop-rate gets higher, people blame the teacher, whereas actually the problem lies with the syllabus. Our textbooks are not up to date . . . the teacher can try to make these dull and boring parts interesting by using the available sources only . . . Authentic materials are very important in helping teachers in such situations."

The most widely used lecture method makes the students passive and dull. When students find the teacher using the authentic materials making them interact with the real world text, the passivity seems to fade away gradually. Mr. A. H. is of the view, "Language is related to . . . the real world. If the teacher uses such things (authentic materials, *realia* and modern teaching aids) that create real contact of the students with the real world . . . They have good effect on the learning and make learning interesting and attractive. Actually, seeing is believing." Ms. S.J. says, "The modern teaching aids develop interest in the environment of the class . . . the proper and suitable use and application of the authentic materials, *realia* and teaching aids are essential for teachers. If these are used only to attract the students' attention in the class and they do not serve the purpose of teaching/learning, their usage is not appropriate." Moreover, merely having the equipment in the class may help in attracting students' attention initially. However, when the students find that these have little bearing on their learning, they get distracted and lose interest.

The authentic materials should be used with the primary purpose of making learning effective and successful. The teaching should not depend entirely on it. Instead, they should be used to facilitate teaching and learning. In this way, the general complaint made against their use in the class that they are not important from the examination point of view, would die its death. Ms. A.S.H. says, "If you use authentic materials in a proper way . . . that actually reinforces the learning of the students." Ms. A.S. says, ". . . if we are doing some audios and visuals, we definitely need to use the proper equipments." Mr. A.H. says, "It totally depends on how the teacher uses it (authentic material, *realia*, etc.) and that how the

students react to it . . . The teacher has to supervise everything in a careful manner. Only then these extra materials would have their desired impact.” Thus the teacher needs to be very vigilant.

These materials have double significance when English is taught and assessed as a language since they help the students to improve their skills. Ms. S.J. says, “Students should be made to realize that their assessment system or their examination system is going to be language-based and not that they have to cram things from their books.” When learners tune into area of language skills, they realize the importance of authentic materials. Once this belief is established among all the stakeholders involved in the target learning/teaching that the objective of the whole process is teaching and assessing language skills, resistance to the use of authentic materials will fade away. Teachers and adult learners will no more be syllabus slaves, and affective barriers will be acceptably low.

## **Conclusion**

In general, the authentic materials have been considered a great help in stretching the attention span of the learners. If authentic materials are used to supplement the course and text book and designed to address learners’ needs, it is likely to be accepted by both teachers and students more readily. There is a need of annual review of the existing syllabus of all levels and grades by a team of experts who should make the syllabus connected with the authentic materials, if not entirely subservient to them. The most optimistic support, in this regard, comes from the element of cyber technology which is gradually replacing the prescribed curricula/textbooks.

The prescribed syllabus in Punjab and Federal Government Colleges has generally been found deficient in a number of areas. The fundamental mistake that our course devisers usually commit is incorporating the content in the syllabus not written or spoken by the native English speakers. This deficiency results in poor exposure of our learners to the real challenges of the global and pluralistic world. Resultantly, even in the classroom, they fall into complete hibernation and lose the required attention span. The material presented and methods of teaching adopted also do not bring any satisfaction or sense of achievement in them.

The teachers involved in this research find extra material, authentic materials and *realia* always useful in language classes as they reduce the affective filter and make the linguistic inputs more comprehensible. They also find teaching aids like audio visual aids effective in making the teaching job easy and systematic, and also in keeping the

learners involved and motivated. But for some teachers, these are attention diverting agents rather than facilitating tools.

However, the advantages of using authentic materials are numerous just like their numerous sources. The greatest advantage of the use of authentic materials is its direct applicability in the lives of the learners. It has been witnessed that the drop-out rate in the adult ESL class, where authentic materials approach is skillfully applied, tends to be low. Once the learners are enrolled after careful assessment of their previous level of skill in the target language and their immediate needs are addressed by proper exploitation of carefully selected and operated authentic materials, there is a reduced incidence of students dropping the course without completion. The main reason for this is that the use of authentic materials makes them more involved and their attention span remains considerably extended. The use of authentic materials makes the learners realize that the class work is not a burden but a worthwhile task that is closely linked with everyday affairs of their lives. As a result their learning zeal remains alive, their morale high and the attention span stretched.

Computer software and the Internet are the best sources of authentic materials provided that they reach the learners after being filtered by professional and experienced teachers. These, then become authentic almost in every meaning and manifestation of the term. Internet is easily accessible to the adult learners. It is rather closer to them when they are away from the classroom environment. It has taken guise of the best friend during the hours of isolation. Introduction of authentic materials through internet in Pakistani classroom of adults should not be blocked because our adults are no longer strangers to the cyber world whether they live in urban, semi-urban or rural areas.

The Internet makes the work of the learner as well as the teacher easier. A great variety of material on the net really arrests the attention span of the learners and removes almost all the psychological barriers in the way of learning. Exposure to the Internet is a good activity as it is an application of communication skills. Adults do not need their teachers' or neighbors' help doing things like searching for jobs or seeking admissions to colleges and universities. Even forms are filled in, there and then, and tests and interviews also conducted on the web. This is how we can address some of the main objectives of adult learners who come to learn English language for practical purposes in their present lives and future growth.

To sum up, the planned and professional use of authentic materials in our classrooms with the primary objective of keeping the

learners' attention span stretched is the need of the hour. The future direction of this desirable and somewhat practicable and productive methodology seems to be very bright. Moreover, dynamic trends in teaching and learner-centrism are also there to welcome the use of authentic materials.

## **Recommendations**

1. Using material and literature from the real world plays an important role in keeping the learners attentive and involved. Adult language learners naturally find these real world contacts more interesting and stimulating than edited and controlled learner world exposure. The use of newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, movies, radio or TV is an easy way to bring the real world into the classroom to increase their interest. They also provide a chance to expose the learner to the cultural aspects of the language.
2. Using audio visual aids while using authentic materials in the class comes in handy in arresting the attention of the learners and in drawing them into a given activity. In particular, while giving instructions for activities or presenting new linguistic inputs, devices such as the OHP or multimedia, laptop, whiteboard, smart board etc., or simply the white (or black) board should be used for reinforcement. Authentic materials given should be first filtered by the professional and experienced teachers. These should embed language learning, cultural insight and practical application.
3. Introducing authentic materials is often hard in the class but majority of the teachers have agreed that with their use, teaching/learning process becomes a fun and the learners remain interested, attentive, participative and focused. If such a class gets a bit noisy, educational administration should appreciate it instead of condemning the teacher. The teachers and administrators should take the classroom as a workshop where the learners learn to do by doing, and acquire the language skills for success in practical life.
4. Using more than one way to pass on instructions related to language activities or to new language inputs for the learners is highly recommended. Use of diversified means opens diversified channels of putting the inputs into the brains of the learners and as a result has a positive impact on the attention span of the learners. The teachers teach to address the immediate needs of the learners. Therefore, they should use the text, written, spoken and recorded by a native speaker of English to develop reading and listening skills of the learners.
5. Teaching English as a language and not as a subject of mathematics, physics or chemistry is also a key recommendation. The purposeful use of authentic materials can be a big help in this regard.

6. Involving situation and context in the use of authentic materials ignite the cognitive process in the learners for real language learning. Here, the teachers should not be unmindful of the learners' linguistic needs which generally initiate from their social survival needs. They should give more value to the learners and less to the text to gain authenticity of purpose. The learners' resistance to the use of authentic materials especially in the subject teachers' class should be handled professionally, democratically and patiently. The judicious, selective and planned use of L1 should be allowed to arrest the attention span of the learners while using authentic materials.
7. Revising the text books used for English teaching periodically for the sake of authenticity is the last but not the least important recommendation. The teachers should be trained to use authentic materials with the primary intent of communicative competence development of the learners on the model of native speakers of the language. They may be given special incentives and rewards on using authentic materials in order to motivate them further to carry on the tough tasks of selecting, grading, streamlining and operating the authentic materials in the class.

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## Appendix

### Chi Square Tests for Quantitative Data Analysis

#### Chi-square test for the independence or association between the attributes for statement 1

We write the hypotheses as following:

1.  $H_0$  = There is independence between language teachers and subject teachers and their responses towards the statement.

$H_1$  = There is association between language teachers and subject teachers and their responses towards the statement.

2. Level of significance  $\alpha$  is given ,  $\alpha = 0.05$
3. Test: Statistics used is  $\chi^2$  where

$$\chi^2 = \sum \left( \frac{(fo - fe)^2}{fe} \right)$$

Computation: The given table of observed frequency is written as:

Table 3: Chi-Square Test for Teachers' Responses to Statement 1

	<b>A<sub>1</sub></b>	<b>A<sub>2</sub></b>	<b>Total</b>
B <sub>1</sub> +B <sub>2</sub>	15+66=81	6+56= 62	B <sub>1</sub> +B <sub>2</sub> = 143
B <sub>3</sub>	2	4	B <sub>3</sub> = 6
B <sub>4</sub> +B <sub>5</sub>	15+2=17	32+2=34	B <sub>4</sub> +B <sub>5</sub> = 51
Total	A <sub>1</sub> =100	A <sub>2</sub> =100	n=200

The corresponding expected frequencies are as follows:

	<b>A<sub>1</sub></b>	<b>A<sub>2</sub></b>	<b>Total</b>
B <sub>1</sub> +B <sub>2</sub>	$\frac{143 \times 100}{200} = 71.5$	$\frac{143 \times 100}{200} = 71.5$	(B <sub>1</sub> +B <sub>2</sub> )= 143
B <sub>3</sub>	$\frac{6 \times 100}{200} = 3$	$\frac{6 \times 100}{200} = 3$	(B <sub>3</sub> )= 6
B <sub>4</sub> +B <sub>5</sub>	$\frac{51 \times 100}{200} = 25.5$	$\frac{51 \times 100}{200} = 25.5$	(B <sub>4</sub> +B <sub>5</sub> )= 51
Total	(A <sub>1</sub> )= 100	(A <sub>2</sub> )=100	n=200

The necessary columns are as follows:

$f_o$	$f_e$	$f_o - f_e$		_____
81	71.5	9.5	90.25	1.26
2	3	-1	1	0.3
17	25.5	-8.5	72.25	2.8
62	71.5	-9.5	90.25	1.26
4	3	1	1	0.3
34	25.5	8.5	72.25	2.8
				_____ = 8.72

- Critical region: = 5.991
- Conclusion: Since the calculated value of = 8.72 is more than the critical value of 5.991, the null hypothesis  $H_0$  is rejected.

### Chi-square test for the independence or association between the attributes for statement 2

We write the hypotheses as below:

- $H_0$ = there is independence between language teachers and subject teachers and their responses towards the statement.  
 $H_1$ = there is association between language teachers and subject teachers and their responses towards the statement.
- Level of significance  $\alpha$  is given ,  $\alpha = 0.05$
- Test: statistics used is  $\chi^2$  where

$$\chi^2 = \sum \left( \frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e} \right)$$

Computation: The given table of observed frequency is written as:

Table 4: Chi-Square Test for Teachers' Responses to Statement 2

	<b>A<sub>1</sub></b>	<b>A<sub>2</sub></b>	<b>Total</b>
B <sub>1</sub> +B <sub>2</sub>	3+27=30	4+24=28	B <sub>1</sub> +B <sub>2</sub> = 58
B <sub>3</sub>	2	14	B <sub>3</sub> = 16
B <sub>4</sub> +B <sub>5</sub>	47+21=68	50=8=58	B <sub>4</sub> +B <sub>5</sub> = 126
Total	A <sub>1</sub> =100	A <sub>2</sub> =100	n=200

The corresponding expected frequencies are as follows:

	A <sub>1</sub>	A <sub>2</sub>	Total
B <sub>1</sub> +B <sub>2</sub>	----- = 29	----- = 29	(B <sub>1</sub> +B <sub>2</sub> )= 58
B <sub>3</sub>	----- = 8	----- = 8	(B <sub>3</sub> )=16
B <sub>4</sub> +B <sub>5</sub>	----- = 63	----- = 63	(B <sub>4</sub> +B <sub>5</sub> )=126
Total	(A <sub>1</sub> )= 100	(A <sub>2</sub> )=100	n=200

The necessary columns are as follows:

f <sub>o</sub>	f <sub>e</sub>	f <sub>o</sub> . f <sub>e</sub>		-----
30	29	1	1	0.03
2	8	-6	36	4.5
68	63	5	25	0.4
28	29	-1	1	0.03
14	8	6	36	4.5
58	63	-5	25	0.4
				----- = 9.86

4. Critical region: = 5.991
5. Conclusion: Since the calculated value of = 9.86 is more than the critical value of 5.991, the null hypothesis H<sub>0</sub> is rejected