

Narrative Inquiry: The Use of Authentic Material in English Language Learning at Elementary School in Banyuwangi

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the experiences of students and teachers in using authentic materials in English language learning at elementary schools in Banyuwangi. Using a qualitative research design and a narrative inquiry approach, the study involved 15 fourth and fifth-grade students and two English teachers who have experience using authentic materials. The findings indicate that the use of authentic materials relevant to the local context significantly enhances students' motivation, language skills, and understanding of English. Students feel more connected to the material taught when it reflects their culture and daily life, such as articles about local tourist attractions and traditions. Although there are challenges in selecting materials that are appropriate for students' skill levels, this research emphasizes that authentic materials can make English language learning more contextual and meaningful. The results of this study provide important insights for the development of curricula and English teaching practices in Indonesia.

Keywords

Authentic Materials; Narrative Inquiry; Student motivation

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1. INTRODUCTION

English education in elementary schools in Indonesia has become one of the main focuses in improving students' global communication skills from an early age. This is important because mastering English provides opportunities for students to access a piece of information and participate in an increasingly connected world. However, despite these efforts, English language teaching in many elementary schools still faces several challenges, especially in terms of selecting material that is relevant and interesting for students.

One approach considered effective in overcoming this problem is using authentic material. Authentic materials, including texts, and images, from real life, allow



students to learn languages in a more natural and contextual context (M, Jaelani A, et al., 2021). Using authentic materials helps students develop their language skills and introduces them to the culture and customs associated with the language. Research shows that authentic materials can improve students' listening, speaking, reading, and **(mendeley)**writing skills in more interesting and applicable ways (Akbari & Razavi, 2015).

In the context of learning English in elementary schools in certain areas, such as Banyuwangi, using authentic materials presents challenges due to cultural, social, and geographical factors that influence how students access and interact with learning materials. Therefore, research on applying authentic materials through a narrative approach (narrative inquiry) is important to understand how authentic materials influence students' learning experiences in the local context (Ma'rufa & Mustofa, 2021) .

2. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative research design with a narrative inquiry approach. This approach was chosen because it was by the research objectives which wanted to explore the experiences of students and teachers in using authentic materials in learning English at the elementary school level. Narrative inquiry allows researchers to collect and analyze stories or narratives related to learning experiences, to produce a deep understanding of how students and teachers feel and interact with authentic materials in the context of English learning (Clandinin, 2006).

Research Questions

This research focuses on several main research questions:

1. What are the students' experiences in using authentic materials in learning English in elementary schools in Banyuwangi?
2. What is the impact of using authentic materials on students' language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing)?
3. What are teachers' perspectives on using authentic materials in English classes and the challenges they face?
4. How do authentic materials help students connect English language learning to their social and cultural context?

Participants

Participants in this research consisted of:

1. Students: 15 elementary school students in Banyuwangi, were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The selected students were 4th and 5th graders aged between 10 and 12 years, who had experienced the use of authentic materials in English lessons.
2. Teachers: Two English teachers who use authentic materials in their teaching.

Sampling Strategy

Sampling was carried out purposively, by selecting participants who had direct experience in learning English using authentic materials. This selection aims to obtain in-depth views from students and teachers who interact directly with the material.

Data Collection Methods

This research uses several data collection methods designed to explore experiences holistically:

1. In-depth Interviews

Interviews were conducted with students and teachers to gain a narrative understanding of their experiences using authentic materials in English language learning. Interviews with students aim to understand how they experience learning with authentic materials, the challenges they face, and whether they find the materials useful and relevant. Interviews with teachers focused on how they integrated authentic materials in the classroom and the challenges they faced in the teaching process.

2. Class Observation

Researchers conducted observations in English classes at the two schools involved in the research. This observation aims to understand how authentic materials are used in learning practices, interactions between students and teachers, and how students interact with authentic materials in the classroom context.

3. Student Reflective Journal

Students are asked to write a reflective journal after each English learning session using authentic materials. This journal provides insight into their thoughts and feelings regarding the material taught, as well as how they interpret these experiences in the context of their daily lives.

4. Documentation of Learning Materials

Researchers collect authentic materials used in English language learning, such as news articles, videos, advertisements, and conversations. This documentation helps researchers to understand the type of authentic materials used, as well as the relevance and suitability of the materials to the local context and student needs.

Data Analysis

Data collected through interviews, observations, reflective journals and material documentation will be analyzed using a narrative analysis approach. The analysis steps are as follows:

1. Transcription and Thematic Code

All interviews and observations will be transcribed verbatim to ensure data accuracy. Transcripts will be coded to identify key themes related to student and

teacher experiences in using authentic materials. These codes will cover topics such as student comprehension, challenges in using authentic materials, as well as ways students relate the language they are learning to the context of their lives.

2. Preparing the Narrative

After the coding process, the data will be analyzed to develop narratives of student and teacher experiences. Researchers will build narratives based on stories told by participants, which describe how they interacted with authentic materials and how these materials influenced the learning process.

3. Data Triangulation

4. To increase the validity of the findings, data triangulation will be carried out by comparing the results of interviews, observations, student journals, and material documentation. Triangulation will help ensure that the findings obtained are reliable and reflect the overall experiences of students and teachers.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research collects data through interviews with students and teachers, classroom observations, student reflective journals, and documentation of learning materials.

Students Experiences in Using Authentic Materials

Most students expressed positive experiences when using authentic materials in English learning. They feel more interested and more motivated when the material taught is related to their real life. From the results of interviews, many students find it easier to understand English when the material studied is contextual and relevant to their daily lives.

One student commented,

"I find learning English very fun when I use pictures of objects around us. It makes it easy for me to understand."

In addition, authentic material of images of everyday life allows students to see firsthand how English is used in a more natural context. However, some students also have trouble understanding the pronunciation of vocabulary. Nevertheless, they felt this challenge provided the opportunity to expand their vocabulary and improve their listening skills.

Some students reported that it was easier for them to understand the vocabulary used in authentic material because these words appeared more often in the context of their daily lives. For example, when they hear conversations in English about topics they know, they feel more connected to the material. One student said:

"I like learning about food or tourist attractions, because I can imagine the place and use words I already know."

The Impact of Authentic Materials on Students' Language Skills

Classroom observations show that the use of authentic materials has a positive impact on students' language skills, especially in listening and speaking skills. Many students seem more enthusiastic when listening to video conversations in English, because they feel it is more realistic and does not seem like ordinary learning material.

One teacher explained,

"Students feel more focused when they listen to authentic conversations, because they know how to pronounce the correct language used in real life. This helps them to apply it in everyday speaking."

In addition, the use of authentic materials helps students to become familiar with more vocabulary used in real situations. Students who are exposed to authentic material are more open to a variety of different accents, intonations, and speaking styles. In this case, they not only learn the words or phrases taught in textbooks, but also how people communicate in a freer, less structured context.

However, there are several challenges faced by students in reading and writing skills. Although they enjoy reading news articles and watching videos, some students find it difficult to understand more complex sentences or more technical terms used in authentic materials. For example, articles about science or technology often contain vocabulary that is difficult for students at a basic level to understand. One student stated:

"Reading school textbooks is very interesting, but sometimes I have difficulty understanding the meaning of the words in them."

Teachers' Experiences in Using Authentic Materials

From the results of interviews with teachers, the majority of teachers admitted that the use of authentic materials was very useful in creating a more lively and relevant learning atmosphere. Teachers report that they feel students become more motivated and more active in class when using authentic materials. One teacher said:

"I feel students are more interested and enthusiastic when we use video conversations or images that come from the real world. They tend to be more enthusiastic about discussing and asking questions."

However, the challenge faced by teachers is in selecting material that is appropriate to the student's ability level. Using authentic material that is too difficult can make students feel anxious and frustrated, whereas if the material is too simple, students may lose interest because they do not feel challenged. In addition, teachers also noted that using authentic materials requires more preparation and adjustment time compared to using materials from textbooks that are clearly structured. Some teachers also reported that they needed to modify materials more frequently to suit students' abilities, so that the materials were not too heavy or too light.

The Role of Authentic Materials in Linking Learning to Local Contexts

One of the important findings of this research is the importance for students of using authentic materials that are relevant to the local context. When authentic materials used are related to local culture or students' daily lives in Banyuwangi, students more easily feel connected to the material being taught. For example, when students read articles about local tourist attractions or listen to conversations about local traditions, they feel more interested and understand English more easily.

One student said:

"I like reading about tourist attractions in Banyuwangi. It makes me feel that English is important, because I can use it to talk about things I am familiar with."

In addition, the use of materials that include local culture helps students feel that English is not just the language taught at school, but also a language that can be used to express their ideas and experiences in their own context.

Discussion

These findings indicate that the use of authentic materials in English learning has a significant impact on students' motivation and language skills, although there are several challenges that must be overcome. These findings are consistent with much previous research suggesting that authentic materials can increase student engagement and provide a more relevant context in language learning (Gilmore, 2007; Nunan, 2004).

Increase Student Motivation and Engagement

Authentic materials provide opportunities for students to be exposed to language used in real life. As found in this research, students feel more interested and more motivated to learn when the material used is relevant to their everyday experiences. This is in line with Nunan's (2004) view which states that materials that are authentic and relevant to students' lives can increase their motivation and involvement in language learning. By listening to and reading material that reflects real life, students can see firsthand the benefits of learning the language.

Challenges in Using Authentic Ingredients

Although many benefits have been found, using authentic materials presents challenges, especially in choosing the right material. As expressed by teachers in this study, material that is too difficult can make students feel frustrated and lose motivation, while material that is too easy does not provide enough challenge. This shows the importance of selecting materials that are adapted to the student's skill level.

Use of Authentic Materials Relevant to the Local Context

Another significant finding in this research is linking English language learning to students' local context. Using materials related to local culture and life can increase students' confidence in using English. This supports the view of Kramsch (1993) who says that language learning relevant to students' cultural context can make learning more meaningful and in-depth. In this context, authentic materials related to local

Banyuwangi culture not only make the material more interesting but also help students feel that English can be used to talk about their world.

More Comprehensive Language Skills Development

Students who are exposed to authentic materials tend to develop their listening and speaking skills more quickly. By listening to conversations or watching videos depicting real-life situations, they more easily understand the intonation, accent, and vocabulary used in everyday contexts. This is also in accordance with previous research which shows that listening to language used naturally can improve listening skills

4. CONCLUSION

This research aims to explore the experiences of students and teachers in using authentic materials in learning English in elementary schools in Banyuwangi. Through a narrative inquiry approach, this research has found that using authentic materials significantly impacts students' motivation, language skills, and understanding of English. In addition, using material relevant to daily life and local culture provides added value for language learning that is more contextual and meaningful for students.

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