

# The Effect Of Using Authentic Materials On School Students' Listening Comprehension And Vocabulary Learning

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## *Abstract*

**Objectives of the study:** This study investigated the effect of using authentic materials on tenth-grade school students' listening comprehension and vocabulary learning.

**Methodology:** The participants of the study were two tenth-grade sections chosen randomly from a secondary school in Kuwait City. One tenth-grade section was assigned randomly to the experimental group and one to the control group. The students of the control group were taught using non-authentic listening comprehension, while the experimental group students were taught using authentic listening comprehension materials. A pre-posttest of listening and another test of vocabulary were designed based on the analysis of the listening and vocabulary activities in the student's textbook. The validity and reliability of the two tests were established before applying them to the participants.

**Results of the Study:** The results of the study revealed statistically significant differences between the control group and the experimental group in both the listening comprehension test and the vocabulary learning test in favor of the experimental students. Authentic materials had greater significant effects than non-authentic materials in improving tenth-grade students' listening comprehension and vocabulary building. Moreover, using authentic materials resulted in a high rate of knowledge retention.

**Conclusion:** The study concluded that authentic materials are useful and effective in improving students' listening comprehension, vocabulary building, and learning. Based on the results of the study, it was recommended that the use of authentic materials in English language textbooks should be increased.

**Key Words:** authentic materials, listening comprehension, non-authentic materials, tenth-grade, vocabulary learning

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## Introduction

Listening is the first language skill a child practices after birth. Moreover, everyone should be good at listening to be good at other language skills. The first foreign language in Kuwait and most Arab countries is the English language. It has become a universal language that unites different cultures, communities, and continents (Kurniawan, 2024). People should be proficient in English to succeed and have good jobs.

Although listening is perceived as a receptive skill, learners should be active listeners to comprehend the message correctly. Some other researchers have started looking at listening as a productive skill. Huong asserted that listening comprehension is no longer passive. It is one of the most challenging and productive skills for students to learn. Learners face difficulties in listening for different reasons. First, it is not their mother tongue, and they do not use it outside their classes. Second, the teaching methods are still traditional ones. Teachers still use English grammar and structure in dialogue, which is sometimes too fast for the EFL learner.

Native speakers write authentic material, usually not for pedagogical purposes. Authentic materials play a significant role in listening comprehension (Tiana & Jimmi, 2024). Using authentic materials may motivate students and improve their listening comprehension. Tiana & Jimmi (2024) approved that using YouTube with authentic materials enhances students' listening abilities. Umiyati et al. (2023) & Vandergrift; and Tafaghodtari. (2010) claimed that listening is important in improving students' language proficiency and performance, so this skill must be mastered.

In the field of language learning, learners need to develop their listening comprehension and build their vocabulary. Al-Hawamdeh & Sawalha (2018) asserted that teachers should emphasize the role of vocabulary acquisition in the proficiency of language learning and the importance of using suitable methods and strategies of teaching.

For secondary-stage students, acquiring listening skills and building vocabulary is necessary for academic success and effective communication in real-world settings. Traditional language teaching materials often fail to expose

learners to the dynamic, contextualized language native speakers use in everyday situations. To address this gap, educators have increasingly turned to authentic materials—real-life content such as news broadcasts, podcasts, movies, and conversations—as a tool to enhance language learning (Chik, 2014).

According to Huong (2020), authentic materials facilitate communication in learning foreign languages and meet learners' needs. Moreover, these materials simplify and support the learning and teaching process. Kozhevnikova (2014) claimed that communication is often achieved through language use in an actual situation, which involves transmitting sociocultural knowledge. Authentic materials are valuable in language instruction because they allow learners to engage with the language in its natural context, providing a richer, more meaningful learning experience. These materials present students with real-world vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and cultural references, allowing them to build vocabulary and improve listening comprehension in ways that textbooks and controlled exercises cannot. Research proves that using authentic materials can positively increase language retention, increase motivation, and help learners develop a more nuanced understanding of the language they are studying (Baniabdelrahman, 2006).

In their study (2022), Mayyas & AbuSeileek highlighted the role of teaching materials and vocabulary learning. They asserted that the teaching materials play an important role in English language learning.

To enhance students' language skills and proficiency, authentic materials could be the best materials for classroom teaching and learning (Mohammed, 2023). Authentic Materials are closer to learners' needs than nonauthentic ones, for they can bridge the gap between the language that is used in the classroom and the one used outside the world (Rao, 2019).

Moreover, the current study aims to explore the impact of authentic materials on secondary-stage students' listening comprehension and vocabulary building. By examining how these materials influence students' ability to understand spoken language in various contexts and their capacity to acquire new vocabulary, this research seeks to contribute to a growing body of knowledge on the effectiveness of authentic materials in language education. Specifically, the study focuses on tenth-grade students' experiences with and responses to authentic listening tasks and the subsequent improvement in listening comprehension skills and vocabulary acquisition.

In the field of language learning, the development of listening comprehension and vocabulary skills is essential for students' language proficiency. For secondary-stage students, acquiring these skills is not only important for academic success but also for effective communication in real-world settings (Brown, 2007). Traditional language teaching materials often fail to expose learners to the dynamic, contextualized language native speakers use in everyday situations. To address this gap, educators have increasingly turned to authentic materials—real-life content such as news broadcasts, podcasts, movies, and conversations—as a tool to enhance language learning (Gilmore, 2007).

Authentic materials are valuable in language instruction because they offer learners opportunities to engage with the language in its natural context, providing a richer, more meaningful learning experience (Mishan, 2005). These materials present students with real-world vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and cultural references, allowing them to build vocabulary and improve listening comprehension in ways that textbooks and controlled exercises cannot (Creswell, 2014). Research suggests that the use of authentic materials can foster better language retention, increase motivation, and help learners develop a more nuanced understanding of the language they are studying (Martinez, 2002; Nunan, 2003). Furthermore, Al Maolyah & Al-Kaf (2020) asserted that vocabulary learning plays an important role in developing critical thinking.

The use of authentic materials in language teaching has received significant attention in foreign/second language acquisition, particularly for its potential to enhance listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and learner motivation. Authentic materials, which include real-life resources such as news articles, podcasts, movies, interviews, and social media content, provide learners with exposure to natural, contextually rich language that textbooks and controlled exercises often fail to offer. This literature review examines studies conducted to highlight the benefits and challenges of using authentic materials in language instruction.

Many studies have dealt with the use of authentic materials. Stempleski & Tomalin (1990) dealt with how to persuade teachers to use authentic materials in their classrooms since traditional methods have failed to engage the learner in the learning process and to be used in teaching to create opportunities for learner participation. Willis (1993) claimed that learners differ in knowledge and skills, so authentic materials may activate the learners' prior knowledge and engage them in the learning process in a better way than

Lamier and Schlerier (1999) highlighted the advantages of using authentic materials and stated that students should be exposed to samples of what is presented daily on television. She emphasized that television advertisements are excellent sources because they're short. She also mentioned that newspapers and magazines are an ideal source for students to discuss current issues.

Ruddock (2000) advocates that the teaching of authentic materials in Japanese schools should be employed only when students reach the intermediate stage because he argued that authentic materials would be too difficult for the intermediate stage. On the other hand, Fogel & Garvey (2007) assured that authentic materials in language teaching positively affect learners' motivation.

Saraf (2011) claimed that utilizing authentic materials in second language classrooms is very important because they positively motivate students to learn the language, because learners feel that they are practicing a real language that is used outside the classroom, and they are a great incentive for students to learn the language directly and quickly.

Sherman (2003) assured that authentic materials help to improve the cultural awareness of learners and keep students in touch with world events. Berardo (2006) said that using authentic materials helps learners to own the true value of education: learning about the latest developments and events in the world. It is part of the teacher's responsibility to teach about developments and events in the world. By doing so, teachers help students bridge the gap between the classroom and the actual situation.

Kilickaya (2004) analyzed the advantages and disadvantages of using authentic materials in English. The paper indicated that authentic materials are essential sources of cultural awareness, increase students' motivation, and meet students' needs. For the disadvantages, authentic materials usually contain complex language and difficult language structures.

Berardo (2006) highlighted the importance of incorporating authentic materials in the classroom and emphasized the advantages of exposing students to such materials. The study demonstrated that providing students with access to a variety of authentic texts allows them to engage with real-world language rather than the artificial language often found in classroom settings. This exposure helps students understand how language is genuinely used in everyday contexts.

Gilmore (2007) reviewed using authentic materials and authenticity in foreign language learning. The paper discussed the gap between authentic and textbook discourse, authenticity and motivation, text difficulty and task design, and their effects on language acquisition. The study found that there is a gap between what is taught in textbooks and authentic materials. Moreover, the paper found that authentic materials increase learners' motivation. The article concluded that there is resistance to curriculum and materials design change.

Omid & Azam (2016) investigated the attitudes and beliefs of EFL Iranian high school teachers towards using authentic materials by a sample of 57 male and female teachers through a survey. The study revealed that the attitudes of EFL teachers toward using authentic materials were positive.

Styati (2016) investigated in a quasi-experimental study the effect of YouTube videos and pictures on Indonesian EFL students' writing performance. Two experimental groups of students in the second semester at the English Department, IKIP PGRI Madiun, were taught, one by YouTube and the second by pictures as authentic materials. The results of the study revealed that the group that was taught by pictures performed better than the group that was taught by YouTube.

Ahmed (2017) explored the use of authentic materials in English as a second/foreign language classroom, highlighting their importance for language learners. The study revealed that authentic and culturally relevant materials are crucial in teaching a second or foreign language. They enhance traditional lessons and can extensively engage learners.

Peters (2019) investigated the effect of TV authentic captions on vocabulary learning. The participants were 142 Dutch learners of English as a foreign language. The results of a pretest and a posttest revealed that the captions group made the most vocabulary learning gains.

Rao (2019) discussed the importance of using authentic materials in English language classrooms. The researcher said that textbook materials fail to present real situations, leading to teachers' disappointment, which pushes the teachers to prepare materials that meet the needs and interests of students. Moreover, using authentic materials in the classroom has several advantages, which are meeting students' interests and needs, exposing students to

real-life situations, enhancing critical thinking, improving creativity, considering individual differences, and motivating learners.

Huong (2020) used semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire to survey students' and teachers' perceptions of using authentic materials in teaching English at Hanoi University. The results of the study revealed that students had positive perceptions of using authentic materials in teaching English.

Mandarsari (2023) qualitatively investigated the types of online authentic materials that teachers use, their perceptions of their use, and the challenges the teachers face in their use. The results showed that teachers use authentic materials, including web short stories, podcasts, online news, YouTube videos, and Google images. The teachers said that online authentic materials are like face-to-face authentic materials, although they preferred face-to-face because of technical problems.

Mohammed & Karam (2024) investigated the effect of using authentic materials in EFL classrooms on EFL students' language skills and proficiency. Two questionnaires and classroom observation were the instruments used in the study. The participants were 50 respondents, 10 instructors, and 40 female students at the College of Arts at the University of Hail-Shimil Branch. The findings of the study revealed that authentic materials enhance English language proficiency and motivate students.

Seoane; Wang; and Kim. (2025) conducted a Meta-Analysis study to investigate the relationship between oral skills, listening and speaking, and written composition. They reviewed 104 studies. They found a significant correlation between oral language and written composition.

To conclude, the current study explores the impact of English language materials on Kuwaiti tenth-grade students' listening comprehension and vocabulary building. By examining how these materials influence students' ability to understand spoken language in various contexts and their capacity to acquire new vocabulary, this research seeks to contribute to a growing body of knowledge on the effectiveness of authentic materials in language education. Specifically, the study focuses on tenth-grade students' experiences with and responses to authentic listening tasks and the subsequent improvement in both listening comprehension skills and vocabulary learning.

The review of the previous studies shows that there is still a dilemma of two points of view regarding using authentic materials in second/foreign language teaching. The first point of view is of those who support using authentic materials because the use of this type of material is an effective way to motivate learners to learn; it encounters them outside the classroom in the real world; it also increases learners' motivation because they feel that they are learning an actual language.

On the other hand, using authentic material may have disadvantages, such as cultural bias and complex and sometimes unimportant words, but such disadvantages can be overcome by considering the level of the learner's language skills.

This study aims to solve this dilemma and participate in facilitating the teaching and learning process of English as a second/foreign language.

### **Problem of the Study and Questions**

Through his observation as a Professor of TEFL, the researcher has noticed that students are weak in English language skills, especially oral ones, which include listening. This weakness might be due to several reasons, of which the teaching methods and the teaching materials could be part of them.

This study aims to investigate the effect of using authentic materials on Kuwaiti Tenth-grade students' listening skills and vocabulary learning. The study attempts to answer the following two questions:

1. How does using authentic materials affect Tenth-grade students' listening comprehension?
2. What is the effect of using authentic materials on Tenth-grade students' vocabulary building?

### **Significance of Study**

This study is significant because it deals with an issue that has a contradictory point of view among educators. Some believe that exposing learners to authentic materials should not be at the school level because it may affect their beliefs and values since they belong to different cultures and may have different beliefs and values. Moreover, they claim that authentic materials include difficult words and difficult structures (Kilickaya, 2004). Some others believe that starting to teach a second or a foreign language early may affect the learner's ability in

his/her mother tongue. On the other hand, researchers assure that the advantages of using authentic materials in teaching English are helpful and lead to a better understanding of the language (Rao, 2019). Solving this dilemma may persuade the design makers to take care of using authentic materials in language teaching

### Operation Definitions

Authentic materials are materials written or spoken in English by native speakers but not for pedagogical purposes. In this study, they refer to materials chosen by the researcher from magazines, websites, and YouTube and taught to the experimental group of the study.

Non-authentic materials: They are listening materials of the Kuwaiti tenth-grade textbook, written or recorded for pedagogical purposes

Listening comprehension: "Listening comprehension encompasses the multiple processes involved in understanding and making sense of spoken language. These include recognizing speech sounds, understanding the meaning of individual words, and/or understanding the syntax of sentences in which they are presented," (Morrow, 1981). In this study, listening comprehension refers to students' understanding of spoken texts and answering the comprehension questions of the post-test.

Vocabulary Learning: It refers to students learning the new words in the textbook and being able to use them in meaningful situations.

### Limitations of the Study:

1. The results of this study are limited to Kuwaiti tenth-grade students of the academic year 2024/2025.
2. The sample of the study consisted of two tenth-grade sections. A bigger sample may result in different results.
3. The location of the study was Kuwait City in Kuwait. Different places may result in different findings.
4. The duration of the study was two months. Longer duration may result in different findings

### Methods and Procedures

#### Design

This study implements a quasi-experimental design. Two Tenth-grade sections of male students were randomly chosen from a school in the Kuwait City Directorate of Education after the school was first randomly chosen out of the Kuwait City secondary schools. One male section of 30 students was randomly assigned to be the experimental group, and the other section of 30 students was assigned to be the control group. One experienced teacher taught the experimental and control groups. The experimental group was taught authentic listening texts, whereas the control group was taught **non-authentic** materials. The topics of the two groups were the same. The authentic materials were chosen from magazines, internet websites, and different social media sources.

The teaching material, authentic or non-authentic, was the independent variable, and the student's achievement in the listening and vocabulary tests was the dependent variable. The students of the two groups were the same age and from the same area. They were 16 years old, and none of them studied in an international school.

The two groups were tested before Treatment to check their equivalence. Then, the two tests of listening comprehension and vocabulary were repeated after teaching the two groups for eight weeks. Moreover, the tests were reapplied to the experimental group four weeks after the end of the study to investigate retention.

#### Instrument of the Study

A pre-posttest of listening and another test of vocabulary were designed after analyzing the listening and vocabulary activities in the student's textbook. Six professors of the English language at Kuwait University validated the two tests of listening comprehension and vocabulary building. All their comments were considered. Based on their suggestions, two multiple-choice questions were removed, and two were added. After validation, the teacher of the two groups approved the listening comprehension test.

The reliability of the two tests was established by piloting them on twenty students who were not part of the study's participants. Then, the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated, and it was 0.942, which is an acceptable value.

The listening test and the vocabulary test consisted of two listening comprehension passages with ten multiple-choice questions and five WH questions, and the vocabulary test consisted of 15 questions, 10 multiple-choice questions, and five WH questions; each question was worth two points. The two groups, the control and experimental, sat for the two tests at the same time. The duration of each of the two tests was 45 minutes.

The researcher and another qualified teacher used the inter-rater procedure to rate students' answers. The two rates were 100% agreeable.

### **Equivalence of the Two Groups**

Before starting the Treatment, an ANOVA test was run to examine the equivalence of the two groups. The table below presents the results.

**Table 1: Equivalence of the Two Groups in Listening Comprehension Before Starting Treatment**

Variable Listening	N	Mean	Std	DF	T-value	Pr
Pre-test Control group	30	15.41	2.59			
Pre-test Exp group	30	15.83	1.2	59	.13	.889

**Table 2: Equivalence of the Two Groups in Vocabulary Building Before Starting Treatment**

Variable Vocabulary	N	Mean	Std	DF	T-value	Pr
Pretest Control Group		14.283	1.96			
Pretest Experimental group		14.66	1.92	59	.56	.578

The results of listening comprehension and vocabulary building show that the experimental and control groups were equivalent before starting Treatment, since no significant differences were found regarding listening comprehension and vocabulary building.

### **Results and Discussion**

The findings of the questions of study are presented in the tables below. Table 3 presents Frequencies, Means, and Standard Deviations of the Students' Answers on the Listening Comprehension Test

**Table (3): Frequencies, Means, and Standard Deviations of the Students' Answers on the Listening Comprehension Test**

Source	Mean	Standard Deviation
Control Group	19.50	2.08
Experimental Group	23.97	1.35

The results in Table 3 above show observed differences between the two groups (control and experimental) for the benefits of the experimental group in listening comprehension.

**Table 4: Frequencies, Means, and Standard Deviations of the Students' Answers on the Vocabulary Test**

Source	Mean	Standard Deviation
Control Group	19.46	2.05

Vocabulary		
Experimental Group	23.77	1.36

The results in Table 4 show observed differences between the two groups (control and experimental) regarding the benefits of the experimental group in vocabulary building.

The above two tables revealed observed differences in the students' achievement of the control and the experimental groups in listening comprehension and vocabulary building. To examine if the observed differences were significant, an ANOVA test was run.

**Table 5: Results of the ANOVA Test of the Effect of Teaching Method on Students' Achievement in Listening Comprehension**

Source	DF	Type III SS	Mean Square	F Value	Pr > F
Teaching Method	1	273.2773764	273.2773764	92.51	<.0001
error	58	441.6610169	2.9540990		
Corrected total	57	168.3836406			

Table 5 above shows a significant difference in the students' achievement in listening comprehension due to the teaching method (conventional teaching versus authentic materials). The experimental group performed significantly better than the control group, meaning that using authentic materials resulted in significantly better results than non-authentic materials.

**Table 6: ANOVA Results of the Students' Answers to the Vocabulary Building**

Source	DF	Type III SS	Mean Square	F Value	Pr > F
Teaching Method	1	273.2773764	273.2773764	92.51	<.0001
error	57	168.3836406	2.9540990		
Corrected total	58	441.6610169			

Table 6 above shows a significant difference in the students' vocabulary-building achievement due to the teaching method (conventional teaching versus authentic materials). The experimental group performed significantly better than the control group, meaning that using authentic materials resulted in significantly better results than non-authentic materials.

### Results of Retention Test of Listening Comprehension

To ascertain the effectiveness of authentic materials on students' ability to remember what was learned, the listening comprehension and vocabulary development tests were reapplied one month after the end of the experiments with authentic and non-authentic materials. The following tables present the results.

**Table 7: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Retention Test of Listening Comprehension**

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Listening Post-test	30	23.97	1.36
Retention	29	23.52	1.18
Retention Test			

Table 7 shows that the mean score of the listening post-test and the mean score of retention are very close (23.86 and 23.52, respectively).

**Table 8: Results of the T-test of Paired Samples of the Retention Test of Listening Comprehension**

N	Mean	SD	t-value	Pr
29	-0.345	0.159	-1.17	0.39

Table 8 shows that there were no statistically significant differences between the mean score of the listening comprehension post-test and the mean score of the retention test, which means that using authentic materials to teach listening comprehension effectively maintained retention for a long time.

### Results of Vocabulary Building Retention Test

**Table 9: Mean and standard Deviation of the retention Test of Vocabulary Building**

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Vocabulary	29	23.77	1.42
Retention	29	23.49	1.30

Table 9 shows that the mean score of the vocabulary-building post-test and the mean score of retention are very close (23.77 and 23.49, respectively).

**Table 10: Results of the T-test of Paired Samples of the Retention Test of Vocabulary Building**

N	Mean	SD	T-value	Pr
29	-0.379	0.160	-1.37	0.250

Table 10 shows no statistically significant differences between the mean score of the vocabulary building post-test and the mean score of the retention test, which means that using authentic materials to teach vocabulary effectively maintained retention for a long time.

The results of this study revealed that teaching authentic materials played a significant role in the learning process. Authentic materials are approved to be more effective in enhancing the learners' understanding of listening comprehension and vocabulary building.

The results showed that the tenth-grade students who were taught via authentic materials performed better in listening comprehension and vocabulary building compared with the learners who were taught via **non-authentic** materials. These results support Rao's (2019) and Breen (2011) findings, which revealed that **non-authentic** material usually fails to present real situations and leads to teachers' disappointment, which pushes teachers to prepare materials that meet students' needs and interests.

The findings of the study revealed that the experimental group students achieved better than the control group in listening comprehension and vocabulary performance. Good students' listening comprehension and vocabulary achievement might be due to using authentic materials. In other words, students in the experimental group might have more concentration on topics, themes, and language from authentic English culture, which might help them in their real life much more than the non-authentic reading materials.

The results of the study can be interpreted and justified based on several justifications emphasized in the previous literature, including that authentic materials are good sources for motivating students to be involved in the learning process. As Rao (2019) stated, using authentic materials in the classroom has several advantages: meeting students' interests and needs, exposing students to real-life situations, enhancing critical thinking, improving creativity, considering individual differences, and motivating learners. Moreover, authentic materials, as stated by Creswell (2014), present students with real-world vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and cultural references, allowing them to build vocabulary and improve listening comprehension in ways that textbooks and controlled exercises cannot.

Using authentic materials, which seem to be more real cultural materials, improved and supported the teaching and learning process. Through his observation of several classes of the experimental group, the researcher noticed that students were actively involved in the different tasks and activities. They were motivated and used to express positive attitudes towards using authentic material.

The results of the current study are also in line with Berardo (2006) and Carol (2022), who noted that authentic material was quite helpful in improving learning skills and motivating students for future learning. Furthermore,

the current study's findings also showed that authentic materials were effective in learning retention of listening comprehension and vocabulary building.

The results of this study support previous studies' claim that authentic materials help prepare EFL students for the 'real' world of communication, guide students toward the language they need for their particular context, and motivate learners to communicate because they help make communication 'real.'

For EFL students to build a good memory of vocabulary and communicate well, they should practice the language as native speakers use it. They should also be exposed to the culture of the language, which is only possible through authentic materials. Using authentic material allows learners to listen and use a second/foreign language in real situations where they learn the language and its culture.

Authentic material could be more difficult than **non-authentic** material; this might be true at the beginning, but after a period of exposure, it becomes more interesting and easier to learn. It is also more effective in knowledge retention (Baniabdelrahman, 2006).

The massive technological development that is taking place today has allowed everyone to communicate with native English speakers easily. Students in schools may benefit the most from this communication, as they are the most frequent technology users, because children naturally love to use technology. Teaching English through non-authentic texts and learning materials will prevent students from knowing the language's cultural and linguistic terms. Accordingly, teaching with non-authentic texts will create a kind of contradiction between the terminology of the language they study and that used by native speakers of that language.

Of course, some educators oppose including authentic materials at the school level. They justify their concern that authentic materials might include cultural values and beliefs that are different from the Arab world culture. Their point of view can be solved by educating the learners about what is acceptable and what is not acceptable in Islamic culture.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigated the effect of authentic and nonauthentic materials on tenth-grade students' listening comprehension and vocabulary learning. Authentic materials proved to be effective in improving students' listening comprehension and vocabulary learning. The results of this study support most of the findings of the previous study. This study supports shifting towards using authentic materials in teaching English language skills in general and listening in particular.

Based on the results of the study, it is recommended to:

1. Redoing the study on a bigger sample.
2. Increasing the number of authentic materials in the English language textbooks
3. Training EFL teachers on how to use authentic materials in their classes.

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