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Benefits and Challenges of Authentic Teaching Materials: Teachers' and Students' Views

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ABSTRACT

The use of authentic teaching materials in English as a Foreign Language instruction has gained increasing attention for its potential to enhance meaningful language learning. However, its implementation faces multiple challenges across educational contexts. This mixed-methods study examines the challenges, limitations, benefits, and perceptions regarding authentic versus non-authentic teaching materials from both teachers' and students' perspectives. The research was conducted in public secondary education institutions in the Department of Lempira, Honduras, during the 2024 academic year. Data were collected using a validated questionnaire administered to 331 students selected via proportional stratified sampling and to a population of 20 teachers. Furthermore, a semi-structured interview was conducted with the teachers. Findings reveal that both teachers and students hold predominantly positive perceptions of authentic materials, recognizing their capacity to increase motivation, improve language skills, and expose learners to real-world English usage. However, significant challenges emerged, including difficulties adapting materials to students' proficiency levels, limited access to technological resources, insufficient teacher training, and time constraints in preparing materials. The study concludes that while authentic teaching materials offer substantial pedagogical benefits, their effective integration requires institutional support, professional development programs, and practical guidelines for their selection and adaptation. A pedagogical guide was developed to support teachers in effectively implementing authentic materials.

Keywords: Authentic Teaching Materials; English Language Teaching; Perceptions; Pedagogical Challenges; Learning Benefits

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1. Introduction

The teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in public secondary education presents unique challenges that differ substantially from those in private schools or universities. In the Department of Lempira, located in western Honduras, public high schools serve a predominantly rural and semi-urban student population. These schools operate with limited resources, including restricted access to technology, unreliable internet connectivity, and minimal budgets for instructional materials. In these institutions, the primary instructional material remains the standardized textbook. However, several criticisms have been raised against these textbooks: the presentations of grammatical structures, audio recordings, exercises, and images often lack internal coherence; textbooks present an idealized representation of English that may not reflect everyday language use; and the listening materials included in textbooks are not equivalent to authentic spoken language used by native English speakers in real life. Consequently, students completing secondary education often struggle to understand real English conversations, news broadcasts, or social media content. Despite the recognized potential of authentic teaching materials to bridge this gap, their use remains limited in the Department of Lempira's public schools due to barriers such as limited time for adapting materials, insufficient teacher training, and concerns about students' comprehension levels. No systematic study has been conducted in this specific context to understand what challenges, limitations, and benefits teachers and students actually perceive regarding authentic teaching materials. Therefore, the present study seeks to address this gap by pursuing one general objective: to describe the challenges, limitations, and benefits of using authentic teaching materials in EFL instruction in public secondary education institutions in the Department of Lempira, and to explore teachers' and students' perceptions of these materials.

Authentic teaching material refers to resources created for native speakers that reflect the language's actual use in everyday contexts rather than for explicit pedagogical ends. According to Peacock^[1], authentic teaching materials are those produced to fulfill a social purpose within the linguistic community. Furthermore, Melone^[2] defines authentic materials as those without a pedagogical purpose: newspaper or

magazine articles, stories, novels, radio recordings, music, pamphlets, videos, etc. Additionally, Andrijević's^[3] view is essential in this area, as it notes that materials for didactic purposes, specifically created for language teaching, subject the naturalness and authenticity of language to an explicit didactic objective. In addition, the language used in this type of text is usually artificial, focused on structures to be taught, and full of perfect sentences and repeated structures. If authentic teaching materials are viewed from Nunan's^[4] perspective, the author defines them as produced for purposes other than language teaching. They can be selected from different sources: videos, clips, recordings of authentic interactions, television, radio, newspaper excerpts, posters, maps and graphics, photographs and images, and schedules. Authentic teaching materials are unmodified resources created for native speakers that reflect genuine language use in real contexts. These materials, which cover a wide range of formats, are valuable in language teaching because they motivate students, develop a range of skills, and facilitate exposure to authentic, meaningful language. Berardo^[5] notes that the sources of authentic materials for the classroom are endless, but the most common are newspapers, magazines, television programs, films, songs, and literature. Wallace^[6] defines authentic texts as real-life texts not written for pedagogical purposes.

This study is guided by a conceptual framework that connects theories of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and pedagogy to four interrelated variables: (a) the benefits of authentic teaching materials, (b) their challenges/limitations, and the perceptions of (c) teachers and (d) students regarding these materials. Krashen's^[7] Input Hypothesis provides the first theoretical pillar: authentic materials (e.g., news articles, unscripted videos) offer comprehensible input that is naturally motivating. This directly supports the benefit variable, as such input lowers the affective filter and promotes acquisition without explicit instruction. Complementing this, Liu's^[8] elaboration of $i + 1$ specifies that authentic materials must be carefully selected—input slightly above current proficiency levels maximizes learning gains. When teachers in our study report that authentic materials “make learning more engaging,” they are empirically confirming Krashen's^[7] claim.

From a sociocultural perspective, Vygotsky^[9] and Lantolf^[10] argue that learning occurs through mediation—tools

that bridge the learner's current and potential development. Authentic teaching materials function as cultural artifacts that mediate interaction between learners and more capable peers or teachers. Thus, the benefit is not merely linguistic but also social: authentic teaching materials generate authentic talk, negotiation of meaning, and collaborative scaffolding. This study captures this through teachers' observations that "students discuss real news articles more actively than textbook dialogues." Ellis's^[11] Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) adds a third benefit: authentic teaching materials enable tasks that mimic real-world language use (e.g., reading a menu, listening to a podcast for information). These tasks develop pragmatic and strategic competence more effectively than pedagogically simplified texts. Consequently, when students in this study perceive authentic teaching materials as "more useful for real life," they are validating TBLT's core premise.

Despite the benefits, authentic materials present challenges and limitations—the second major variable. Chomsky's^[12] Universal Grammar (UG) posits an innate language faculty, but Hawkins and Chan^[13] note that in SLA, learners often fail to acquire certain grammatical features (e.g., subjunctive mood, article systems) even with abundant authentic input. This is because authentic teaching materials may lack systematic grammatical highlighting found in textbooks. Thus, a limitation emerges: authentic exposure alone does not guarantee full grammatical acquisition. Teachers understudied may report that "students understand the gist but make persistent errors"—direct evidence of this theoretical gap. Additionally, the Critical Pedagogy of Norton and Toohey^[14] identifies a different limitation: authentic teaching materials often reflect dominant cultural norms, potentially marginalizing learners from non-mainstream backgrounds. If materials are not critically selected, they can reproduce inequality rather than empower learners. This challenges the assumption that authentic teaching materials are inherently beneficial. This research explores whether teachers and students perceive this as a limitation in their specific contexts. Practical limitations—such as the time required for material selection, the difficulty of calibration, and the lack of supporting exercises—are not merely practical but are theoretically grounded in Vygotsky's^[9] Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD): materials far outside the ZPD cause frustration rather than learning. When teachers

cite "students feeling overwhelmed," they are observing a violation of the $i + 1$ principle.

The third and fourth variables—teachers' and students' perceptions—are not separate from theory but are mediating factors that determine whether potential benefits or limitations materialize in practice. Richards^[15] argues that the communicative approach succeeds only when practitioners believe in its principles. If teachers perceive authentic materials as "too difficult to prepare," they will avoid them regardless of theoretical benefits. Conversely, if students perceive them as "interesting and relevant," their motivation amplifies the input's effectiveness. Drawing on Holme^[16] and Ungureanu^[17], literacy is sociocultural: the perception of a text as "authentic" depends on the reader's cultural frameworks. A news article may feel authentic to one student but foreign and intimidating to another. Therefore, this study does not treat perceptions as secondary opinions but as theoretically crucial variables that mediate the entire learning process.

2. Literature Review

In terms of research on the subject, several studies have examined the impact of using authentic materials on foreign language learning. In Indonesia, Mandarsari^[18] found that teachers use materials such as YouTube videos and podcasts, although they face technical challenges. Erlina et al.^[19] and Handayani and Dewi^[20] highlighted that these materials improve students' motivation and language skills. In Pakistan, Rehman and Perveen^[21] found that teachers want to use them but are constrained by the curriculum. Thai and Nguyen^[22] in Vietnam and Taiwan showed that authentic materials increase student engagement. In the Philippines, Domogen^[23] noted the need to adapt resources to local contexts.

In Oman, Mamba^[24] highlighted that integrating authentic materials into the curriculum exposes students to real-world contexts, thereby enhancing both conceptual comprehension and long-term knowledge retention. Wang and Lee^[25] reported advances in reading and listening comprehension in China. In Palestine, Orooq and Abdel Razeq^[26], and in Morocco, Ouafaa and Koumachi^[27] highlighted teachers' positive attitudes towards these materials. In Uzbekistan, Ungboeva and Djumabaeva^[28] emphasized the value of audiovisual resources. In Latin America, Sandoval Pérez et

al.^[29], and Ávila Castillo and Criollo Vargas^[30] showed that authentic materials improve motivation and academic performance.

In Mexico, Jiménez Gómez and Morales Vásquez^[31] identified limitations in available resources and in their use outside the classroom without a didactic methodology, as well as the repetitive use of the few materials teachers have. In Argentina, Roxana-Rubín and Azevedo-Gomes^[32] highlighted the importance of selecting appropriate materials. In Chile, Lizasoain and Vargas Mutizabal^[33] highlighted a lack of teacher preparation for using textbooks. Overall, these studies agree that authentic materials are effective tools, but their implementation requires overcoming challenges such as adaptation, access, and institutional support.

Despite the valuable contributions of the studies reviewed above, several important gaps remain. First, the vast majority of existing research focuses on either teachers' or students' perspectives alone, with very few studies capturing both groups simultaneously in the same context. This is problematic because mismatches between what teachers intend and what students experience are common when using authentic teaching materials, yet these mismatches cannot be identified without paired data. Second, while many studies report general "benefits" (e.g., improved motivation) and "challenges" (e.g., technical difficulties), none have systematically examined how the same group of teachers and students differentially perceive the benefits, challenges, and limitations of authentic materials within a single institutional framework. Third, the existing literature largely treats "challenges" and "limitations" as interchangeable concepts, failing to distinguish between external obstacles (e.g., lack of internet access, rigid curriculum) and inherent limitations (e.g., grammatical features absent in authentic texts, cultural bias embedded in materials). This conceptual blurring hinders the development of targeted pedagogical solutions. Fourth, and most critically, no study to date has compared teachers' and students' views on authentic teaching materials in the specific context of public high schools in the Department of Lempira, Honduras, where large class sizes, limited institutional resources, and examination-oriented educational cultures may produce unique dynamics not observed in the university or private-school settings that dominate the literature.

To address these gaps, this study offers four distinct

contributions. By collecting data from both teachers and students within the same 19 public institutions, this study enables direct comparison of their perspectives, revealing areas of alignment and divergence. This study explicitly operationalizes benefits, challenges, and limitations as separate variables, distinguishing between external obstacles and inherent limitations based on participants' own descriptions. Furthermore, this study focuses on public high schools in Honduras, a context underrepresented in the authentic materials literature. In addition, by including the entire population of English teachers (N = 20) alongside a representative sample of their students, this study provides a comprehensive, contextually grounded account that can inform both local pedagogical decisions and broader theoretical models of implementing authentic teaching materials. In doing so, the present research does not merely replicate previous work but extends it by filling the conceptual, methodological, and contextual gaps identified above.

3. Materials and Methods

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to combine the strengths of quantitative and qualitative research. Mixed-methods studies, as Hernández-Sampieri and Mendoza^[34] point out, are especially useful and relevant when the complex nature of the object of study requires both an in-depth qualitative exploration of the phenomenon's subjective and contextual dimensions and quantitative measurement of its extent, frequency, or impact using standardized instruments, thus achieving methodological triangulation that enhances the validity of the findings. A sequential explanatory design was adopted, consisting of two complementary phases: first, the collection and analysis of quantitative data using a standardized questionnaire, followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data through semi-structured interviews. As Tashakkori and Teddlie^[35] point out, this design allows qualitative findings to enrich and explain the initial quantitative results, thereby generating a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Furthermore, the study employed a non-experimental, cross-sectional design, which, according to Kumar^[36], meant that variables were not manipulated, and data were collected at a single point in time to determine the prevalence of perceptions, attitudes, and challenges within the target population.

3.1. Participants and Sampling

The target population consisted of 2,380 students enrolled in public high schools in the Department of Lempira during the 2024 academic year, according to the Departmental Directorate of Education of Lempira. Using the Decision Analyst STATSTM 2.0 program with a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level, the required sample size was calculated as 331 students. Then, proportional stratified sampling was implemented. Each of the 19 participating educational institutions was treated as an independent stratum. Within each institution, students were selected in proportion to the institution's enrollment. As Fowler^[37] points out, stratified sampling ensures that important subgroups are proportionally represented in the sample. Also, Bryman^[38] highlights that this sampling method is effective at capturing variability within the target population, making it a valuable tool for research seeking to understand complex phenomena across diverse educational contexts. Unlike students, all English teachers working at the 19 public institutions participated in the study, constituting the entire population rather than a sample. Specifically, 20 teachers took part: one teacher from each of 18 institutions and two teachers from the largest high school: Centro de Educación Media Gubernamental Técnico "Dr. Ramón Rosa" (which employs two permanent English teachers).

3.2. Instruments and Data Collection

3.2.1. Validated Questionnaire

A questionnaire (see **Appendix A**) was selected as the quantitative instrument because it allows for the efficient collection of standardized, measurable data from a large sample ($n = 331$ students and $N = 20$ teachers). The Questionnaire on Perception and Use of Authentic Materials was adapted from previous studies, such as Padilla Partida and Reynaga Cárdenas^[39], and underwent content validation by a panel of experts and pilot testing, ensuring the clarity and relevance of the questions regarding the use of authentic materials in English teaching. It consists of 16 items divided into five sections: Section A refers to demographic data and includes 4 items; Section B consists of 3 questions on the use of teaching materials; Section C corresponds to the perception of authentic materials and consists of 5 items; Section D has 2 questions about the

challenges and benefits of using authentic materials; and Section E includes 2 questions about the experience of using authentic materials. The questionnaire was administered in paper-and-pencil format during regular class hours. The researcher visited each of the 19 participating institutions on pre-arranged dates. Prior to distribution, the researcher explained the purpose of the study, assured anonymity, and obtained written informed consent from both school directors and parents or guardians. Students were given 25 min to complete the questionnaire. Completed questionnaires were collected immediately by the researcher in sealed envelopes to ensure confidentiality.

3.2.2. Teacher Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews (see **Appendix A**) were selected as a qualitative data collection tool. The semi-structured interview protocol was adapted from Montaña Acosta's^[40] research, lending it scientific validity. In this study, the instrument was refined through expert reviews in language teaching and a pilot test to ensure that the questions covered critical aspects of teaching practice. This interview contains 15 questions divided into 4 sections. All 20 English teachers from the 19 public institutions were invited to participate in interviews. Each interview was conducted individually at the teacher's respective institution in a private room (the staff office) to ensure confidentiality and minimize distractions. Interviews were scheduled at times convenient for each teacher, typically during non-teaching periods or lunch breaks. The duration of each interview ranged from 25 to 45 min. All interviews were audio-recorded with the teacher's explicit written consent. After each interview, the audio recording was transcribed verbatim within 48 h to preserve accuracy.

3.2.3. Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaires were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 27.0. Descriptive statistics were calculated for each item. Qualitative data from the transcribed interviews were imported into Atlas.ti version 25. A thematic analysis approach was followed, involving six phases: (a) familiarization with the data, (b) generation of initial codes, (c) searching for themes, (d) reviewing themes, (e) defining and naming themes, and (f) producing the final report. Codes were derived from both the

theoretical framework (benefits, challenges, limitations, perceptions) and emergent patterns in the data. To integrate the quantitative and qualitative findings, methodological triangulation was conducted using a sequential explanatory design. The quantitative data were first analyzed to identify general patterns and tendencies in students' perceptions regarding the benefits, challenges, and limitations of authentic materials. The qualitative data were then transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis, yielding emergent themes. Following the separate analyses, the two datasets were systematically compared and contrasted. Three types of relationships were examined: convergence, divergence, and complementarity.

4. Results

4.1. Overview

Findings from the questionnaire indicate that while students view authentic teaching materials almost uniformly as interesting, useful, and engaging, teachers' opinions are more divided. The 20% of teachers who consistently disagreed across all items represent a subgroup whose negative perceptions warrant further qualitative exploration. These teachers may have experienced failed implementations, lack institutional support, or hold pedagogical beliefs that prioritize grammatical accuracy over communicative authenticity. It is confirmed that teachers and students do not share the same perceptual landscape regarding authentic materials, underscoring the importance of collecting data from both groups rather than generalizing from one to the other. On the other hand, the analysis of the interviews reveals that teachers face external challenges, including difficulty finding beginner-appropriate materials, insufficient time for adaptation, language complexity, and insufficient training. Moreover, it shows that teachers perceive multiple benefits from authentic materials, such as increased student motivation, improved listening comprehension, greater confidence, enhanced cultural understanding, and better vocabulary retention and fluency. In addition, it identifies inherent limitations of authentic materials, including mismatches with beginner levels, the need for adaptation, gaps in technological resources, curricular prioritization of textbooks, and a pronounced lack of training.

4.2. Findings from the Questionnaire

Table 1 shows students' responses about their perceptions of authentic teaching materials. 7.9% of students strongly disagree that authentic teaching materials are more interesting than non-authentic ones, while 15.4% remain neutral. Most students, 39.9% and 36.9%, responded with "agree" and "strongly agree", respectively. There were no answers registered under the "disagree" option. When asked whether authentic teaching materials reflect actual English usage, 4.8% of the total number of students answered "strongly disagree", 2.7% disagreed, and 10.6% remained neutral; however, 42.6% of the students under study agreed, and 39.3% completely agreed. Furthermore, when asked about the improvement in language skills, 4.8% of students said "strongly disagree," 13.3% were neutral, 45.0% said "strongly agree," and 36.9% said "agree."

Regarding the adaptability of authentic teaching materials to students' needs, 8.2% of the participants responded "strongly disagree", 26.0% of them answered "disagree", 31.4% remained neutral, showing a great number of students are unable to perceive how difficult it is to adapt authentic teaching material to their needs, 15.7% agreed, and 18.7% strongly agreed. Finally, concerning students' commitment to using authentic teaching materials, 7.6% answered "strongly disagree", 2.4% "disagree", 21.1% "neither agree nor disagree", 29.0% "agree", and 39.9% "strongly agree". These data indicate a positive trend toward authentic teaching materials from students' perspectives, although some reservations remain regarding their adaptability; most students view them as useful and appealing.

In **Table 2**, teachers' perceptions of authentic teaching materials are detailed, revealing that 45.0% of the teachers participating in this study answered "strongly agree" that these materials are more interesting than non-authentic materials, while 20.0% of them said "strongly disagree" and 15.0% remained "neither agree nor disagree". Regarding its ability to reflect actual English usage, 50.0% of the participants were "strongly agree", compared with 20.0% of them who were "strongly disagree" and 5.0% who remained "neither agree nor disagree". Regarding the improvement of students' language skills, 50.0% answered "strongly agree", while 20.0% stated "strongly disagree", and no teacher answered "neither agree nor disagree".

Table 1. Students' perception of authentic materials.

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Authentic materials are more interesting than non-authentic materials.	7.9%	0.0%	15.4%	39.9%	36.9%
Authentic materials better reflect the actual use of English.	4.8%	2.7%	10.6%	42.6%	39.3%
The use of authentic materials improves students' language skills.	4.8%	0.0%	13.3%	36.9%	45.0%
Authentic materials are more difficult to adapt to students' needs.	8.2%	26.0%	31.4%	15.7%	18.7%
Students feel more engaged when they use authentic materials.	7.6%	2.4%	21.1%	29.0%	39.9%

Table 2. Teachers' perception of authentic materials.

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Authentic materials are more interesting than non-authentic materials.	20.0%	15.0%	15.0%	5.0%	45.0%
Authentic materials better reflect the actual use of English.	20.0%	10.0%	5.0%	15.0%	50.0%
The use of authentic materials improves students' language skills.	20.0%	10.0%	0.0%	20.0%	50.0%
Authentic materials are more difficult to adapt to students' needs.	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	5.0%	35.0%
Students feel more engaged when they use authentic materials.	20.0%	10.0%	25.0%	20.0%	25.0%

In addition, 35.0% of teacher respondents “strongly agree” that authentic materials are more difficult to adapt to students' needs, with 20.0% of them answering “strongly disagree”, and another 20.0% of teachers said, “neither agree nor disagree”. Regarding student engagement, 25.0% stated that they “strongly agree” that they feel more engaged when using authentic teaching materials, while 20.0% said “strongly disagree” and 25.0% were “neither agree nor disagree”.

Unlike students, whose positive views were more uniform, teachers showed greater polarization, with 20% strongly disagreeing about the interest and usefulness of authentic teaching materials. This divergence suggests that teachers' classroom experiences and challenges—such as lack of time, training, and resources—may generate more varied and nuanced perspectives from English as a Foreign Language teachers.

A comparative analysis of the response patterns reveals three key distinctions between students and teachers.

First, the direction and strength of positivity. Students demonstrated uniformly positive perceptions across most items, with agreement and strong agreement consistently exceeding 70% for items related to interest, reflection of actual English usage, and language skill improvement. Teachers, however, showed a more polarized pattern. While a substantial proportion of teachers strongly agreed with the benefits of authentic materials (45–50% on positive items), a consistent minority of 20% strongly disagreed across all five items. This bimodal distribution among teachers suggests that the teaching population is divided into two distinct groups: enthusiastic adopters and firm skeptics. Second, certainty and neutrality. Students rarely selected the neutral option (“neither agree nor disagree”), with percentages ranging from 10.6% to 31.4% across items. Teachers, conversely, showed higher neutrality on certain items, particularly regarding student engagement (25% neutral) and adaptability (20% neutral). This difference indicates that teachers hold more nuanced or

uncertain views of authentic teaching materials, shaped by varied classroom experiences, whereas students base their perceptions on immediate affective responses. Third, the adaptability paradox. Both groups acknowledged the difficulty of adapting authentic materials to students' needs, but for different reasons. Students who agreed or strongly agreed with this statement (34.4% combined) likely perceive difficulty in terms of comprehension—materials being too hard or too easy. Teachers who agreed or strongly agreed (40% combined) likely perceive difficulty in terms of pedagogical labor—time, selection criteria, and alignment with curriculum. This distinction, while not captured in the quantitative data alone, emerged as a critical divergence in the interpretation of the same item.

As presented in **Table 3**, a series of chi-square tests of independence was conducted to compare student and teacher perceptions of authentic teaching materials across five questionnaire items. The results revealed statistically significant differences between the two groups for four of the

five items, indicating that students and teachers do not share identical perceptions. For the item “Authentic materials are more interesting than non-authentic materials,” a significant association was found between group membership and response, $\chi^2(4) = 24.18, p < 0.001$. Students showed a strong positive skew, with 76.8% agreeing or strongly agreeing, while teachers displayed a bimodal distribution: 45% strongly agreed, but 20% strongly disagreed. Similarly, for “Authentic materials better reflect the actual use of English,” the difference was significant, $\chi^2(4) = 19.45, p < 0.001$. Students again demonstrated uniform positivity (81.9% agreement), whereas teachers showed polarization (50% strongly agreed, 20% strongly disagreed). Regarding “The use of authentic materials improves students' language skills,” a significant difference emerged, $\chi^2(3) = 16.82, p < 0.001$. Notably, no teacher selected the neutral option; 50% strongly agreed, and 20% strongly disagreed, while students showed consistent agreement (81.9% combined agree/strongly agree).

Table 3. Inferential Test: Comparison of Student and Teacher Perceptions.

Item	χ^2 Value	df	p-Value	Significant
Authentic materials are more interesting than non-authentic materials.	24.18	4	<0.001	Yes
Authentic materials better reflect the actual use of English.	19.45	4	<0.001	Yes
The use of authentic materials improves students' language skills.	16.82	3*	<0.001	Yes
Authentic materials are more difficult to adapt to students' needs.	7.21	4	0.125	No
Students feel more engaged when they use authentic materials.	12.67	4	0.013	Yes

Note: *: Degrees of freedom = 3 for this item because no teacher selected “Neither agree nor disagree,” reducing the number of valid response categories.

For “Students feel more engaged when they use authentic materials,” a significant difference was found, $\chi^2(4) = 12.67, p = 0.013$. Students reported high engagement (68.9% agreed/strongly agreed), whereas teachers were more divided: 25% strongly agreed, 20% strongly disagreed, and 25% were neutral. This suggests that teachers perceive student engagement as more variable than students themselves report. The only item that did not reach statistical significance was “Authentic materials are more difficult to adapt to students' needs,” $\chi^2(4) = 7.21, p = 0.125$. Both groups acknowledged the difficulty of adaptation, though for different reasons: students likely perceive difficulty in terms of comprehension (materials too hard or easy), while teachers perceive difficulty in terms of pedagogical labor (time, selection criteria, curriculum alignment). Despite these different interpretations, the overall response distributions were not statistically distinguishable. In short, students held uniformly

positive perceptions across all items, while teachers demonstrated greater polarization and neutrality. The significant differences on four of five items confirm that teachers and students do not share the same perceptual landscape regarding authentic materials. This finding underscores the importance of collecting data from both groups rather than generalizing from one to the other. The sole nonsignificant item—adaptability—suggests a rare point of agreement, though the underlying reasons for that agreement differ between the two populations.

4.3. Findings from Semi-Structured Interviews

Teachers identify several challenges in using authentic teaching materials, as shown in **Figure 1**. These challenges are best understood as external obstacles—barriers that arise from the implementation context rather than from

the nature of authentic materials themselves. Difficulty in finding suitable materials for beginner students. Multiple teachers, including Teacher 6, Teacher 13, and Teacher 17, specifically mentioned the lack of accessible materials for low-level learners. Many resources are designed for native speakers and may be too advanced or complex for students learning English as a foreign language. This challenge directly relates to the objective of this study, as it represents a barrier to effective design and implementation. Teachers

cannot implement what they cannot find. Regarding the lack of time for material adaptation, Teacher 1 and Teacher 11 noted that the limited time teachers have during their working day in public secondary institutions constitutes a recurring obstacle. Adapting authentic materials requires additional preparation beyond textbook-based instruction. This challenge is structural rather than pedagogical: teachers are not resisting authentic materials; rather, their working conditions do not accommodate the extra labor required.

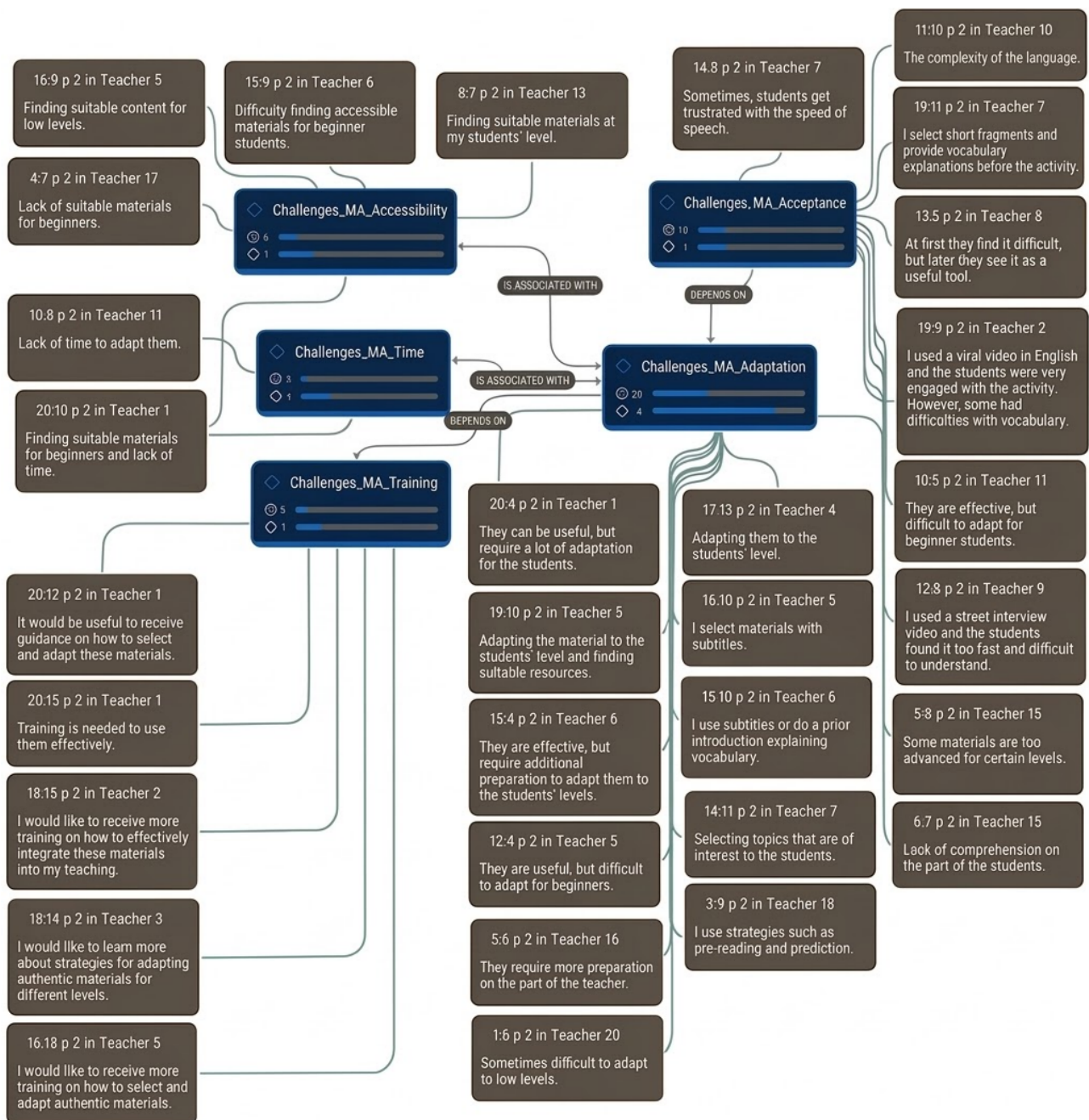


Figure 1. Challenges in using authentic teaching materials.

When examining the complexity of language in authentic teaching materials, Teacher 7 and Teacher 9 highlighted that fast-paced speech and unfamiliar vocabulary can lead to student frustration, especially at lower levels. This challenge represents a tension between the theoretical benefit of authentic input and the practical reality that unmodified authentic materials may exceed students' current proficiency levels. Another key challenge is the lack of training. Teacher 1, Teacher 2, Teacher 3, and Teacher 5 explicitly expressed a desire for more guidance and training in selecting, adapting, and integrating authentic materials. This training gap includes both pre-service preparation (undergraduate and graduate programs) and in-service professional development. Without training, even motivated teachers may struggle to implement authentic materials effectively.

After addressing the strategies teachers employ to overcome challenges, Teacher 6, Teacher 7, Teacher 15, and Teacher 18 reported using subtitles, selecting topics of interest to students, pre-introducing key vocabulary, and using pre-reading and prediction activities. However, despite these efforts, the need for additional preparation and the ongoing difficulty of adapting materials for beginner students remain evident and urgent, as Teacher 6, Teacher 10, Teacher 11, and Teacher 20 mentioned. The challenges identified are primarily systemic rather than pedagogical. Teachers possess the will and some strategies to use authentic materials, but they are constrained by time, training, and resource availability. Addressing these challenges requires institutional solutions—protected preparation time, professional development opportunities, and curated material repositories—not merely individual teacher effort.

Teachers highlight numerous benefits of using authentic teaching materials in their classes, as shown in **Figure 2**. The benefits reported by teachers converge on a central finding: authentic materials bridge the gap between classroom language and real-world language. Students who use authentic materials are more motivated, more confident, and better prepared for actual communication. Therefore, all these benefits directly address the proposed aim of this study. First, they point out that these materials increase students' motivation and interest by allowing them to connect with the language in real, everyday contexts, making them more attractive and relevant. This is supported by multiple teach-

ers, including Teacher 2, Teacher 5, Teacher 11, Teacher 12, Teacher 15, Teacher 16, Teacher 18, and Teacher 19, who explicitly linked authentic materials to greater motivation, interest, and a closer connection with the language in real contexts. Teacher 4 and Teacher 10 noted that these materials are more dynamic, attractive, and better represent language as it is used naturally. This finding aligns with the claim that authentic input is inherently motivating because it carries communicative value beyond language practice.

In addition, Teacher 4 specifically mentioned improvements in listening comprehension and the use of idiomatic expressions. Teacher 20 highlighted better listening comprehension and exposure to different accents. Teacher 18 and Teacher 3 noted benefits in fluency, understanding of diverse accents, and cultural understanding. This benefit is particularly significant because textbook audio materials rarely represent the full range of English varieties and natural speech patterns. Another important benefit is the improvement of students' confidence in their ability to understand and use the language, as authentic materials prepare them for real communication situations. Teacher 7 emphasized that authentic materials increase student confidence by presenting realistic and useful challenges for their future. Teacher 17 and Teacher 8 similarly noted that authentic materials boost students' confidence in their comprehension abilities. This finding addresses a key outcome of communicative competence: learners who successfully comprehend authentic texts develop self-efficacy that transfers to real-world language use.

Teachers also highlight that these materials encourage the development of critical thinking and cultural understanding by exposing students to different contexts and perspectives. This was reflected in Teacher 19's observation that authentic materials contribute to greater motivation, better listening comprehension, and the development of critical thinking. Exposure to different contexts and perspectives encourages students to analyze, compare, and evaluate rather than simply memorize. Also, regarding vocabulary retention and fluency, Teacher 20 noted greater vocabulary retention, and Teacher 18 noted improved fluency. Authentic materials present vocabulary in rich contextual environments, which supports deeper encoding and retrieval compared to decontextualized word lists. Therefore, across the data, authentic materials are consistently associated with increased

motivation and interest, improved listening comprehension and exposure to diverse linguistic features, greater student confidence, enhanced cultural understanding, and the development of critical thinking and fluency.

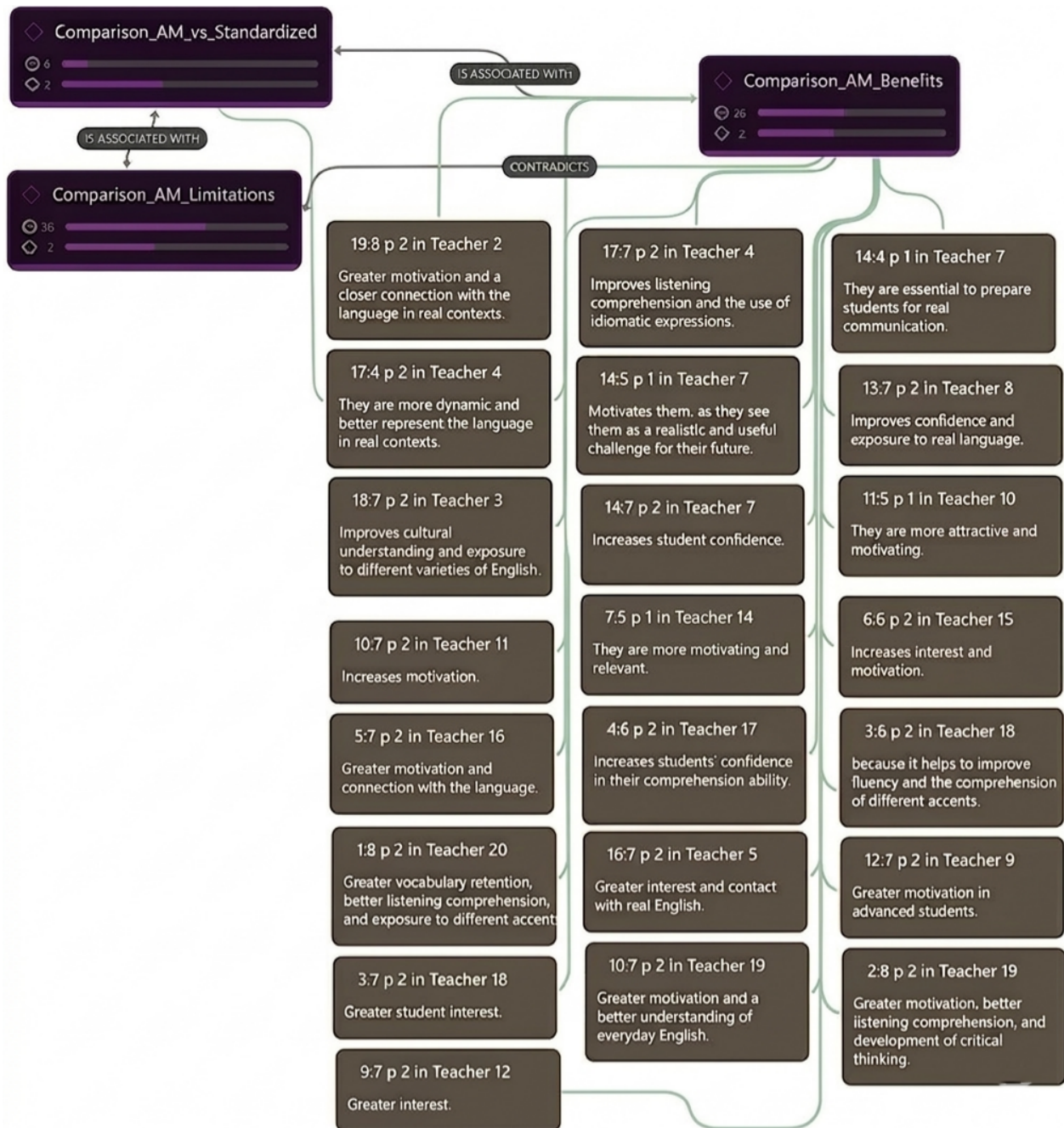


Figure 2. Benefits of using authentic teaching materials.

Figure 3 shows several limitations in the use of authentic teaching materials that teachers have identified to achieve the study's main objective. Unlike challenges (external obstacles), limitations are inherent constraints of authentic materials themselves, regardless of context. There is difficulty in finding suitable materials for beginner students. This concern was

expressed by multiple teachers, including Teacher 1, Teacher 5, Teacher 9, Teacher 10, Teacher 12, Teacher 15, and Teacher 17, who explicitly noted challenges such as finding suitable content for lower levels and the lack of materials adapted for beginners. This is both a challenge (external) and a limitation (inherent): authentic materials, by definition, are created for

native speakers, not language learners. Therefore, a certain degree of mismatch at the beginner level is unavoidable.

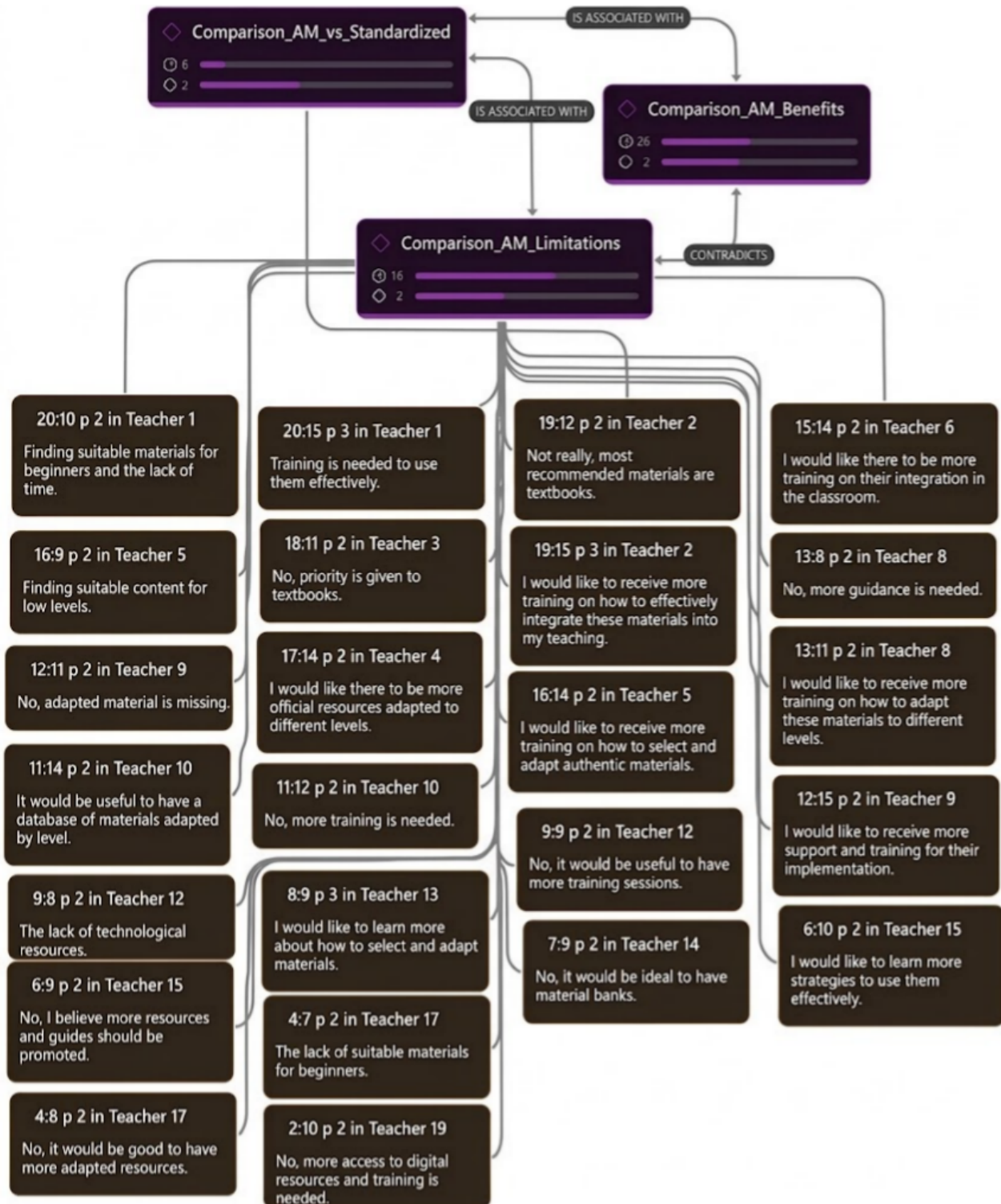


Figure 3. Limitations on the Use of Authentic Teaching Materials.

In addition, the lack of time to adapt these materials to students' specific needs is a recurring obstacle, as it requires additional teacher preparation. Teacher 1 specifically mentioned the lack of time alongside the difficulty of finding

suitable materials, highlighting the dual constraint teachers face. While this is primarily an external challenge, the need for adaptation itself stems from an inherent limitation: authentic materials are not pedagogically designed, so they almost always require some modification for classroom use. Moreover, Teacher 12 noted a limitation regarding the lack of technological resources and access to digital platforms. Even when suitable, authentic teaching materials are available online, teachers cannot use them without devices, internet access, and familiarity with the platform. This limitation is contextual but interacts with the inherent nature of many authentic materials, which are increasingly digital.

Teachers also mention the prioritization of textbooks and standardized materials in curricula, which limits the integration of authentic resources. Teacher 3 noted that priority is given to textbooks, while Teacher 2 similarly observed that most recommended materials are textbooks. This reflects a systemic preference that marginalizes authentic resources. This limitation is structural but also ideological: curricula that prioritize standardized materials implicitly devalue authentic alternatives. They also point out a lack of training and capacity to select, adapt, and implement these materials effectively, hindering their optimal use in the classroom. This need for training was widely expressed by Teacher 1, Teacher 2, Teacher 5, Teacher 6, Teacher 8, Teacher 9, Teacher 10, Teacher 12, Teacher 13, Teacher 15, and Teacher 19, who called for more guidance, training sessions, and strategies for effectively integrating authentic materials. This limitation is systemic but interacts with an inherent feature of authentic materials: they require pedagogical expertise to deploy effectively, unlike scripted textbooks that provide ready-made activities.

Some teachers suggest that it would be useful to have online repositories of materials adapted to different levels and to provide more training on strategies for integrating them. Teacher 4, Teacher 7, Teacher 10, Teacher 14, and Teacher 17 specifically mentioned the need for more official, accessible, level-adapted resources and material banks. Teacher 8, Teacher 9, and Teacher 15 further emphasized the importance of receiving more support, guidance, and training. In summary, the identified limitations include accessibility challenges for beginners, time constraints, insufficient technological resources, curricular prioritization of textbooks, and a pronounced lack of training. The pedagogical guide

developed from this research addresses the limitations by providing selection criteria, adaptation strategies, and low-technology alternatives.

5. Discussion

Regarding student perceptions, students held mostly positive attitudes toward authentic materials. Most agreed that these materials are more interesting than traditional ones and better reflect real-world English use, a finding consistent with Cazho Acero and Guamán Luna^[41] and Ávila Castillo and Criollo Vargas^[30]. Regarding teachers' perceptions, most consider authentic materials more interesting than non-authentic ones and believe they better reflect actual English use. This view is also supported by studies, such as Jiménez Gómez and Morales Vásquez^[31], which emphasize that using authentic materials boosts intrinsic motivation, generating genuine interest and promoting confidence when learning a language. However, teachers also identified various challenges in implementing these materials. One of the most significant is adapting resources to match students' levels of linguistic proficiency, which aligns with studies by Erlina et al.^[19], Domogen^[23] and Rehman and Perveen^[21], who highlight the difficulty in customizing materials to meet learners' unique needs, proficiency levels, and cultural and educational contexts. To address this, teachers in Lempira used strategies such as subtitles, topic selection, and pre-teaching vocabulary, as recommended by Orooq and Abdel Razeq^[26], who state that materials should be tailored to students' English proficiency levels.

The lack of time and inadequate teacher training in selecting and adapting authentic materials—identified as key obstacles in this study—are recurring barriers, as documented by Lizasoain and Vargas Mutizabal^[33], who reported that teachers received no formal training in using materials. Technological limitations also hindered implementation. While Mandarsari^[18] reported similar connectivity issues, Ávila Castillo and Criollo Vargas^[30] found that technology improved listening skills—a contrast discussed below. Despite positive perceptions, an attitude-practice gap emerged. Although 85% of students and 75% of teachers agreed that authentic materials improve language skills, their use in classrooms remained sporadic. This contradicts the assumptions in Ouafaa and Koumachi^[27] and Orooq and Abdel Razeq^[26]

that positive perceptions guarantee sustained implementation. Furthermore, 20% of teachers consistently disagreed on the questionnaire yet acknowledged benefits during interviews, suggesting that survey responses may reflect professional identity claims rather than purely pedagogical judgments—a methodological insight absent in Sandoval Pérez et al.^[29] or Jiménez Gómez and Morales Vásquez^[31].

Authenticity is not an inherent property but a relational construct. Materials teachers deemed authentic were sometimes rejected by students as too difficult, while materials teachers considered artificial (e.g., simplified news) were perceived by students as authentic when topics were familiar. This challenges the binary distinction maintained by Peacock^[1] and Nunan^[4]. Additionally, discourse about the benefits of authentic materials functions partly as a professional identity marker. Teachers who positioned themselves as innovative reported positive perceptions, while pragmatists or exam-focused teachers expressed skepticism. This complicates neutral accounts in Rehman and Perveen^[21] and Thai and Nguyen^[22]. While Ávila Castillo and Criollo Vargas^[30] and Ungboeva and Djumabaeva^[28] emphasize technology as an enabler, this study found that in Lempira, technology was as much a barrier due to connectivity failures. This contradicts the techno-optimism of Wang and Lee^[25] and Mandarsari^[18], suggesting that low-technology alternatives may be more sustainable in resource-poor contexts.

5.1. Pedagogical Implications

As a result of this research, a pedagogical guide was developed based on the research findings. It is organized into four sections: (1) key concepts of authentic materials; (2) a framework for selection, design, and adaptation based on four criteria (proficiency level, thematic relevance, accessibility, classroom applicability), including checklists and guiding questions; (3) strategies for integrating materials into listening, reading, writing, and speaking, with adaptation techniques for mixed-proficiency groups; and (4) curated digital banks of authentic materials (via URLs and QR codes), along with low-technology alternatives. The guide is novel for three reasons. First, unlike generic resources for well-funded private schools, it addresses constraints on public secondary education in low- to middle-income settings. Second, it is empirically grounded: time constraints (the most cited barrier) led to prioritizing efficient selection strategies;

student preference for videos led to more video-based examples. Third, it integrates high- and low-technology pathways, ensuring usability even in the least-resourced schools. Thus, the guide serves as a practical, context-sensitive tool to reduce implementation barriers.

5.2. Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights into the use of authentic teaching materials in public secondary education in Lempira, several limitations must be acknowledged. Although all English teachers in Lempira participated ($N = 20$), this population size is small and may not be representative of teachers in other regions or countries. The student sample ($n = 331$), while representative of Lempira's 2,380 students, was drawn from only one department in western Honduras. Students in urban departments may have different levels of English exposure, access to technology, and attitudes. The study also excluded private schools and other educational levels, limiting conclusions to public secondary education. The findings are deeply embedded in Lempira's specific conditions: limited internet, minimal budgets, large classes, and a textbook-focused curriculum. The 20% teacher polarization, for example, may be specific to contexts where repeated implementation failures occur due to a lack of institutional support. Readers should avoid extrapolating these findings to contexts with different resources, curricula, or teacher preparation systems.

The mixed-methods design prioritized depth over generalizability. Qualitative findings ($N = 20$ teachers) are intended for analytical generalization (illuminating theoretical relationships) rather than statistical generalization. The study lacked classroom observations, so the data rely on self-reported perceptions, which may be subject to social desirability bias. The cross-sectional design captured perceptions at one point in time (2024) and cannot reveal how practices evolve or whether the pedagogical guide leads to sustained change. Finally, the study did not measure student language outcomes directly (e.g., via pre-/post-tests), relying instead on perceived improvement. Thus, findings should be interpreted as a contextually grounded account of one department in Honduras, not as universal truths. The study's value lies in informing local decision-making and serving as a comparison point for future research in similar low- to middle-income public school contexts.

5.3. Future Research Directions

Longitudinal studies are needed to examine how language skills evolve with the use of authentic teaching materials over time. Research should also explore their use at elementary and university levels, as well as the influence of sociocultural factors (e.g., family environment, access to English media). Future studies might investigate the integration of authentic teaching materials with innovative methods such as project-based learning, gamification, and artificial intelligence in language education. Such research would expand knowledge of best practices and support evidence-based educational policies to strengthen English teaching in public institutions.

6. Conclusions

This study confirms the significance of authentic materials in teaching English as a foreign language in secondary education, particularly because of their positive effects on student motivation and communicative development. These resources are perceived by both teachers and students as more engaging than traditional materials because they relate to real-world situations and current topics. Using authentic texts—including songs, videos, and audio recordings—encourages meaningful learning, promotes learner independence, and supports the development of communicative skills by immersing students in real communicative contexts. However, the study also revealed an unexpected attitude-practice gap: despite overwhelmingly positive perceptions, actual classroom implementation remains sporadic, suggesting that positive attitudes alone do not guarantee sustained use.

Despite their recognized value, the integration of authentic materials remains limited by structural and pedagogical constraints. In many public high schools in Lempira, inadequate technological infrastructure—such as unreliable internet access, lack of language labs, and limited digital platforms—restricts access to updated resources like news articles, podcasts, and videos. Consequently, teachers often rely on printed materials, reducing the multimodal richness and pedagogical effectiveness of these resources. This situation is worsened by a persistent reliance on Spanish as the medium of instruction, which, although useful in specific contexts, limits students' exposure to English and decreases opportunities for meaningful interaction in the target

language. Contrary to the techno-optimism found in some previous studies, technology in this context functioned as much as a barrier as an enabler.

At the pedagogical level, the study highlights inadequate teacher training as a key obstacle. Many educators lack formal education in choosing, adapting, and methodically using authentic materials. Although some have developed intuitive strategies to evaluate their appropriateness, the lack of clear didactic guidelines often results in modifications that reduce the materials' authenticity and effectiveness. Furthermore, the belief that authentic resources require more planning encourages a continued reliance on commercial textbooks and grammar-focused activities, which often present language out of context. A critical insight emerging from this study is that "authenticity" is not an inherent property of a material but a relational construct shaped by teacher beliefs, student perceptions, and institutional contexts.

These combined factors help explain the variability in teachers' attitudes: those with greater access to resources or personal initiative tend to value authentic materials more positively, while those facing systemic limitations may adopt more resistant positions and rely on standardized textbooks. Notably, a consistent minority of teachers (20%) strongly disagreed with the benefits of authentic materials on the questionnaire, yet these same teachers acknowledged advantages during interviews, suggesting that survey responses may capture professional identity claims rather than purely pedagogical judgments. Overall, the lack of structured and ongoing professional development programs emerges as the key obstacle, as it prevents teachers from systematically integrating authentic materials and, consequently, limits their potential to improve students' language learning outcomes. Addressing this obstacle requires institutional solutions—protected preparation time, curated material repositories, and sustained training—not merely individual teacher effort.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Universidad Internacional Iberoamericana (approval No. CE-091) on October 4th, 2024.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement

The data for this study can be obtained from the corresponding author upon reasonable request; however, the data are not publicly available to protect participant privacy.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

AI Use Statement

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author used Grammarly solely to check grammar, sentence structure, spelling, and punctuation. No AI tools were used for data analysis, interpretation, or generation of scientific content. All outputs were critically reviewed and edited by the author. The author takes full responsibility for the integrity and accuracy of the work.

Appendix A

Appendix. A.1. Questionnaire on the Perception and Use of Authentic Materials in the Teaching of English

Instructions: Below is a series of questions about the use of authentic materials in the teaching of English as a foreign language. Please answer as honestly as possible. Your answers will be confidential and will only be used for research purposes.

Section A: Demographic Information

Age:

- ☐ Less than 15 years old
- ☐ 15–20 years
- ☐ 21–25 years
- ☐ 26–30 years
- ☐ 31 years or older

Sex:

- ☐ Male

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I'd rather not say it

Educational Level (only for teachers):

- ☐ Baccalaureate
- ☐ Primary school teacher
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's Degree
- ☐ Doctorate
- ☐ Postdoc

Experience in teaching English (only for teachers):

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1–3 years
- ☐ 4–6 years
- ☐ 7–10 years
- ☐ More than 10 years

Section B: Use of Authentic Materials

How often do you use authentic materials in your English classes?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Frequently
- ☐ Always

What types of authentic materials do you frequently use? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Newspaper/magazine articles
- ☐ Videos (movies, documentaries, etc.)
- ☐ TV/Radio Programs
- ☐ Music (songs, lyrics)
- ☐ Social Media/Online Content
- ☐ Online resources (blogs, podcasts, interactive websites)
- ☐ Other (specify): _____
- ☐ None

In what activities do you mainly use these materials? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Reading comprehension
- ☐ Listening comprehension
- ☐ Oral production
- ☐ Written production
- ☐ Vocabulary/Grammar
- ☐ Other (specify): _____

What do you consider to be the greatest benefits of using authentic materials in the classroom? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Improves students' language skills
- ☐ Improves understanding of actual English usage
- ☐ Facilitates exposure to different cultural contexts
- ☐ Promotes the development of communication skills
- ☐ Other (specify): _____

Section C: Perception of Authentic Materials

How much do you agree with the following statements about authentic materials?

(1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly agree)

- a. Authentic materials are more interesting than non-authentic materials.

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5

- b. Authentic materials better reflect the actual use of English.

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5

- c. The use of authentic materials improves students' language skills.

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5

- d. Authentic materials are more difficult to adapt to the students' needs.

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5

- e. Students feel more engaged when they use authentic

materials.

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5

Section D: Challenges and Benefits

What are the main challenges you face when using authentic materials? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Difficulty finding suitable materials
- ☐ Complexity of language in authentic materials
- ☐ Lack of time to prepare activities with these materials
- ☐ Student resistance to using authentic materials
- ☐ Lack of technological resources to use certain materials
- ☐ Other (specify): _____

What do you consider to be the greatest benefits of using authentic materials in the classroom? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Improves students' language skills
- ☐ Improves understanding of actual English usage
- ☐ Facilitates exposure to different cultural contexts
- ☐ Promotes the development of communication skills
- ☐ Other (specify): _____

Section E: Open Comments

- ☐ Could you describe any positive experiences you have had using authentic materials in your English class?
- ☐ Is there anything else you would like to add about using authentic materials in teaching English?

Appendix A.2. Semi-Structured Interview for Teachers on the Use of Authentic Materials in English Teaching

Instructions: This interview aims to explore your experiences and perspectives on the use of authentic materials in the teaching of English as a foreign language. Your answers will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only. We thank you in advance for your participation.

Section A: Use of Authentic Materials

- ☐ Could you describe how you define "authentic materials" in the context of English teaching?
- ☐ How often do you use authentic materials in your En-

glish classes?

- ☐ What types of authentic materials do you commonly use in your classes?
- ☐ What kinds of activities or lessons do you find the use of authentic materials most helpful in?

Section B: Perception of Authentic Materials

- ☐ What is your overall perception of the effectiveness of authentic materials compared to non-authentic materials (such as standard textbooks)?
- ☐ How do your students perceive the use of authentic materials in the classroom?
- ☐ Do you think that using authentic materials improves the development of your students' language skills? Why or why not?
- ☐ What are the main benefits you have observed from using authentic materials in your classes?
- ☐ Could you share any particularly positive or negative experiences you've had using authentic materials?

Section C: Challenges and Strategies

- ☐ What challenges have you faced in incorporating authentic materials into your teaching?
- ☐ How do you address these challenges in your daily practice?
- ☐ Do you think there is enough institutional support for the use of authentic materials?

Section D: Reflection

- ☐ How do you see the future of using authentic materials in English teaching?
- ☐ What recommendations would you give to other teachers who want to incorporate more authentic materials into their classes?
- ☐ Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience or perspectives regarding the use of authentic materials in English teaching?

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