The Effects of Authentic Materials on EFL Students' Attitudes and Confidence in Speaking Skills

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Abstract

This study investigates whether adult EFL students' speaking abilities improved when exposed to authentic audiovisual materials. The findings show that these materials were enthusiastically embraced in the classroom. The participants reported that real-world language samples could improve their ability to communicate in the target language. Depending on each student's personality, interests, and classroom setting, the themes chosen for course materials may have an impact on students' motivation. The findings also suggest that authentic materials may motivate EFL students to speak more readily, although the degree of success may vary.

Introduction

The focus of this study is to investigate how learning materials from real-world media are received by working adult EFL learners in Vietnam and whether such learners can benefit from this kind of materials in terms of speaking confidence. Many working adults in EFL contexts hesitate to initiate conversations in the target language and struggle to form complete statements. Without the teacher's support, many would not be able to keep the conversation flowing. They often need to search for words when speaking. Their self-consciousness further exacerbates a fear of making mistakes, resulting in students giving up fluency for accuracy. At the same time, they are busy working adults with limited time to practice outside of the classroom. The questions are whether these learners would welcome the use of authentic materials, and whether they could boost their confidence in class oral activities. Answering these questions would help evaluate the use of authentic materials as an approach to solving particular EFL problems, especially in Vietnam. In Vietnam, language schools are faced with a low supply of qualified teachers and the general neglect of practical, interactive skills in favor of a test-oriented classrooms. These factors result in a low overall quality of EFL learning and teaching (Nguyen & Phung, 2015).

Authentic Materials in Language Learning and Teaching

Authentic materials are samples of language that are naturally produced for the purpose of authentic communication (Gilmore, 2007). The materials selected for teaching must also reflect the naturalness of language use and cultural aspects, as displayed in a regular conversation

undertaken by native speakers (Rogers & Medley, 1988). The most accessible source of audiovisual materials are various forms of media, such as TV programs and videos on the Internet.

The use of authentic materials in EFL contexts is not a new approach. This type of naturally-occurring content is believed to motivate and appeal to learners more than standard textbooks (Bahrani & Tam, 2012; Gilmore, 2007; Halim et al., 2018; Hartatik & Rahmah, 2016; Raja, 2015). For example, Hartatik and Rahmah (2016) incorporated authentic videos, dialogues, and pictures in the lesson content for 22 first-year college Indonesian students in a Basic Speaking class and found that exposure to language used in real-world contexts is greatly appreciated by college students. According to the authors' elaboration, the students' excitement came from seeing native speakers interact with each other in natural contexts, which gives them a genuine illustration of how the language works. This leaves the other question unanswered: Are students interested in the content of the materials per se, and in what manner?

Refai (2018) provided information that might help to complete the picture. In his study, a questionnaire was administered to 30 first-year EFL students. Three other first-year students were interviewed to further investigate the students' attitudes and perceptions towards the use of authentic listening materials in EFL listening lessons. Refai concluded that besides being aware of the benefits of authentic materials, the participants also displayed the ability to recognize the differences between authentic and contrived materials, as well as to perceive authentic materials as great sources of entertainment. Refai's findings seem to align with Mudra's (2014), who directly investigated the enjoyability of authentic content from EFL learners' perspectives, and their preferred types of authentic materials. The results showed that all these students find authentic materials enjoyable in various ways, depending on each individual's learning objectives. For example, some preferred watching the news, while others preferred watching English movies and reading books or newspapers. However, a problem with Mudra's study is that all participants were already at a considerably high level of language proficiency and were highly motivated to seek out and learn from such materials.

A more comprehensive study was conducted by Halim et al. (2018), featuring 50 12th-grade students in two classes in Indonesia. They set out to look into the students' perceptions on the use of authentic materials for listening and reading activities compared to the textbook's content. Overall, the vast majority of the participants agreed that authentic materials should be used in the classroom, and that their learning can greatly benefit from this type of materials as opposed to ordinary textbooks. For instance, students appreciated the opportunities to comprehend and practice various kinds of real-world vocabulary and conversation, including the more complex ones. Given the choice, 98% of the respondents chose films and songs as their favorite types of classroom materials, as opposed to radio podcasts (30%) and newspapers (34%). This suggests that the students are more inclined to select materials with high recreational value, supporting Mudra's (2014) and Refai's (2018) findings.

The next major issue to be discussed is whether the use of authentic materials in the classroom increases students' confidence to speak English or not. In Hartatik and Rahmah (2016), interview data revealed that most students feel more confident in oral production activities after exposure to authentic materials presented as classroom content. However, there is

a lack of clarity as to whether the participants were dealing with confidence issues prior to the study, or whether the materials were a mere source of inspiration that strengthened their willingness to express themselves. Furthermore, their data suggested that changes in the number of students who complain about the difficulty of the materials and the number of those feeling more confident after interacting with that particular kind of text are related. This was probably due to some of the participants' frustration when struggling to comprehend the texts. Although the number of participants in the study is too small to assert any numerical significance, that reported frustration is a concern shared with Mudra (2014), which he considers one disadvantage of using authentic materials. Excerpts of interview data from Mudra (2014) and Refai (2018) show that some students find real-life discourses between native speakers challenging and quite time-consuming to decode. However, Halim et al. (2018) seemed to disregard the matter, suggesting that their participants benefited from utilizing authentic materials without having any such difficulties.

Raja (2015) looked at the matter from a different angle. He surveyed 200 English language teachers from various colleges in Pakistan and interviewed 10 of them to investigate the perceived effects of authentic materials on adult learners' attention span. According to the participants, students who were once passive and uninvolved—allegedly due to the repetitive and outdated textbook content—became enlivened and actively engaged while interacting with dialogues and audiovisuals from the real world. The interviewees attributed this change in attitude to the use of authentic materials as the means through which the living language is introduced to the classroom, showing students how closely classroom tasks may be linked to practical use in the outside world, thus creating a language learning environment that is meaningful and constructive. Remarkably, Raja also stated that adult EFL classes that include authentic materials in lessons have a low dropout rate, mainly due to their attention span being more maintained and refreshed and their affective filter reduced.

The participants in all the studies above showed strong interest in authentic materials, especially those with highly entertaining content. They are also aware of the ways using authentic materials can benefit their learning. Raja's (2015) observation of the low dropout rate of adult classes where authentic materials are employed is extremely significant, as this particular group of learners may have different daily routines, priorities, and attitudes compared to high school or college students. Meanwhile, Mudra (2014) notes the issue of determining what kinds of content a particular group of learners would find enjoyable and how such content would relate to their learning goals. Regarding the role authentic materials play in boosting learners' confidence in oral production activities, the evidence presented by Hartatik and Rahmah (2016) points towards a positive response. Raja (2015) also provides promising data on how disengaged students can be encouraged to participate in their learning thanks to authentic materials. One problem that may undermine this advantage is the difficulty and complexity of the language used by native speakers communicating with each other, which can cause frustration for learners, as warned by Mudra (2014), Hartatik and Rahmah (2016), and Refai (2018). Another concern to be considered is the cultural contexts. One participant in Mudra (2014) raised concerns about cultural-based content that might appear challenging for learners to understand or cause cultural conflicts. This suggests the importance of thorough consideration when choosing materials.

To contribute to the existing literature, first, the present study aims to directly look at confidence in speaking. This sets it apart from other studies that focus primarily on students' attitudes or motivation in general (Bahrani & Tam, 2012; Halim et al., 2018; Hartatik & Rahmah, 2016; Raja, 2015). The data collection and analysis process was designed to this end. Additionally, the present study involves controversial authentic materials with Vietnamese learners who are working adults. Mudra (2014) advises that materials should be selected so as to avoid potentially controversial topics. However, Truong and Tran (2014) observed that Vietnamese students generally understand the importance of appreciating cultural differences. This study investigates whether authentic videos that challenge students' beliefs can stimulate them to speak up and defend their views.

Research Questions

Accordingly, the research questions are as follows:
1. What are students' attitudes towards the use of authentic materials?
2. What are the effects of authentic materials on students' confidence in oral activities?

Methodology

Materials

The matierals used in the course under study are excerpts from YouTube videos and TV series. The course itself ran for 16 hours in four weeks, with two two-hour class meetings per week. Conforming to the specifications put forward by Gilmore (2007) and Rogers and Medley (1988) about authentic language and naturalness, the videos were chosen so that none of them were originally produced for EFL learners. However, it was made sure that the language used in the videos was not too far beyond the students' proficiency. To avoid the regular prejudice in Vietnam against "non-standard" accents (Tran & Phuong, 2017), the videos only feature inner circle natives speaking the General American English accent and Received Pronunciation. The topics of the videos were also familiar to regular EFL learners, namely food, health, weather, and clothing. One video on incense paper burning was deliberately selected, in which Asians' and Westerners' different views on the matter were shared. Since the culture of incense paper burning is deeply rooted in Vietnam, the topic was meant to cause a cultural conflict. This was to see whether such friction can affect the participant's willingness to share their thoughts and to what extent. This video was shown at the end of the course.

Participants

The participants in this project were two male and four female low-intermediate students aged between 22 and 24.[1] Their pseudonyms are An (male), Chi (male), Duong (female), Phuong (female), Giao (female), and Hoa (female). They were working as colleagues in a software company in Vietnam and taking this language course as required by their training program. Class meetings took place twice weekly for four weeks in a spare room in the headquarters

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1   There were originally 8 participants, but two withdrew from the project due to private matters.

building. These meetings were well-equipped with technological aids. As the teacher and sole course developer, I had complete autonomy in the class organization process. By the end of the program, the students were expected to be able to maintain communication in English at an intermediate level with international customers.

Aware that this language course played a crucial role in their career ladder, the students diligently followed the teacher's instructions and eagerly participated in class activities. The students were used to the Confucius Heritage Culture (CHC) style of teaching (Nguyen et al., 2005), which means that they viewed the teacher in class as an authoritative figure and rarely raised opposing views.

Data Collection
To address the research questions, three data collection methods were employed, namely the quantitative questionnaire, qualitative observation, and semi-structured interview. The questionnaire gathered data that could be used to set up a baseline for qualitative analysis (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2012). Through the survey, the students' attitudes towards audiovisual content, the frequency with which they interact with such materials, and the relevant reasons were established. The questionnaire also revealed participants' subjective views of their confidence in free speaking and why they thought so. To make full use of this method's advantages, I conducted a second questionnaire halfway through the course and examined whether there were changes in the participants' self-assessment and perspectives.

The common drawback of the questionnaire and interview is that the data produced depend on the students' candor. Thus, the data can be easily distorted if they refuse to be open and honest (Hinchey, 2008; Leman, 2010). Participant observation was therefore conducted. This method yields data from the teacher-researcher—a different perspective, which is a perfect component for data triangulation.

At the beginning of the first session, a questionnaire survey (in Vietnamese) was administered. Each student was given enough time to complete the questionnaire on their own. To mitigate the possible influence participants may have on each other, no discussion was allowed. The questions included how much the respondents liked to watch videos in English, the frequency with which they watch English videos and why, and how confident they feel when communicating in English. The second questionnaire was conducted in the same manner—at the beginning of the fourth session. In this version, one question was added regarding the effects of authentic materials used in class on the students' confidence. I was present during both surveys to supervise and provide explanations, if needed. The responses were collected and sorted manually into tables.

The observation was conducted every session and lessons were recorded with the students' consent. Notes on each student's behavior were taken in class and reviewed with the recordings. The foci were patterns and differences in student behavior between class meetings when working alone, in pairs, and in groups. Factors such as the students' genders and proficiency levels were also taken into account.

After the last class meeting, a semi-structured interview was conducted. All the participants chose to speak Vietnamese, the language they are most comfortable with, so that no

language barrier would interfere with communication. For the participants to feel more secure, interviews were conducted one-on-one inside a private room at the company's building (Smith & Bowers-Brown, 2010). As this took place during business hours, each participant could only spare 10 minutes maximum. All the conversations were recorded and transcribed with consent. The interview questions were designed so that the information gained from the observation and questionnaire could be confirmed, while at the same time, additional data could be gathered when needed. Questions had to be varied for each participant, and tailored follow-up questions to further pursue details were regular and expected. The data were transcribed and translated as closely as possible into English.

Analytical Procedure
Phase 1 data triangulation was conducted immediately after the second questionnaire. The quantitative survey data was contrasted with the observational data from the first four sessions. The data showed no significant change in students' confidence and motivation at this point. A probable explanation is that the time was not long enough for any change, as there were only two weeks between the first questionnaire and the second. This was also echoed by the participants in the interview at the end.

Phase 2 started when observational and interview data were fully collected at the end of the course. Questions asked in the interview revolved around three main points similar to the second questionnaire: (1) the students' experience during the course, including their attitudes towards and perception of the usefulness of the materials; (2) how they perceive their confidence before, during, and after the course; and (3) their reaffirmation of the researcher's observation of their behavior.

Open coding and axial coding were conducted for both observational and interview data. The small number of participants allowed for manual coding. The notes were coded line-by-line on the computer. From there, concepts were drawn and sorted into datasets. Datasets from observation and interview were compared with each other and the quantitative data, completing the second phase of triangulation. Each participant was assigned two datasets, one for each main theme. The main themes I looked for were degrees of the students' attitude to the materials, whether they felt more or less confident, and whether the reason for that change was related to the materials.

Further analysis revealed that some students did not cope well with the difficulty of materials, which may have affected their attitudes. Nevertheless, the beneficial effects of authentic materials on the students' confidence may not fully correlate with their positive attitudes, and vice versa. Finally, the classroom environment could have played a role in strengthening the students' confidence.

Findings

Attitudes

The findings indicate that all six students had positive attitudes toward the use of authentic materials in class. They agree that seeing how the language is used in real-life contexts has strengthened their motivation for learning.

Attitude Shift Toward Positive Perception

Student Hoa's improved attitude was observable early on. In the first questionnaire, she stated that she was not interested in watching videos in English, explaining that she did not understand much of them and did not know how to find suitable videos to watch. During the lessons, however, she appeared attentive and was often the first to guess and comment on the videos' content. Two weeks later, the second questionnaire data confirmed this positive change, with the participant choosing "I fairly like the materials" instead of "indifferent." She was also the only student in class who could recall the exact details of videos in past lessons. Like students An and Duong, Hoa confirmed in the interview that she liked watching videos better than before and would now frequently watch them on YouTube.

An and Duong's positive reaction was predictable, as they already revealed in the two questionnaires that they "fairly like" watching videos in English. However, observational data did not clearly show this positive attitude, aside from their attentiveness, which was expected of every student in this class. Surprisingly, it was the interview session that revealed their enthusiasm. To An, this is the method of learning that works best for him:

> Interviewer: Bạn thấy việc xem video bằng tiếng Anh thế nào?
> *[What do you think about watching videos in English?]*
> An: Em thấy rất thú vị. Thật ra thông thường ấy, nếu như mà là thời điểm này trong ngày, cho em ngồi học 2 tiếng chắc em ngủ lâu rồi. [...] Nhưng khi mà mình xem video ấy, thì nó cũng giống như một hình thức mình giải trí [...] Học phải ngồi 2 tiếng nhưng mà cũng có cảm giác rất là nhanh...
> *[I find it very interesting. To be honest, normally if I had had to sit through 2 hours of class at this time of the day <evening class>, I would have fallen asleep soon. [...] But watching the videos felt like a form of entertainment [...] I have to sit for 2 hours for class, but I felt that the time flew by really fast].*

Duong, likewise, emphasized the strong motivational boost brought to him by the materials: "Từ lúc đi học xem video đến giờ thì về nhà em mới học tiếng Anh, chứ trước thì không bao giờ em quan tâm. [It wasn't until we started watching videos in class that I started learning English at home. I never cared about that before.]" This is a noticeable change. Similar to Hoa, as revealed in the questionnaire, he only rarely watched videos in English because he did not understand them and did not know how to find quality videos.

Phuong presents the most remarkable case. Based on assessments and observations prior to this project, she was the student with the most limited language proficiency. She later explained in the interview: "Trước thì em chỉ học tiếng Anh từ lớp 6 xong không động vào nữa, học xong 3 năm cấp 3 là thôi, đến lớp này. [I only started learning English in 6th grade and I never touched it again after finishing the three years of English in high school until this course.]" In the first questionnaire, she chose "indifferent" towards watching videos, stating the common

reason of not understanding them. Observation data showed that she was quiet for a good part of class time and only spoke when addressed, after an ample amount of preparation. Her first sign of attitude improvement was in the second questionnaire. Phuong stated that she "fairly liked" the videos, despite her other responses remaining unchanged. She also started commenting on the content shown in class, albeit scarce and infrequent. Her growing passion was fully revealed during the interview. She also said that the materials had encouraged her to continue interacting with English.

> Phuong: Chắc là bây giờ em đã thấy thích hơn vì bây giờ về nhà em coi phim mà có phụ đề ấy để em nghe nhân vật trong phim nói tiếng Anh. Còn trước là em không để ý lắm nên coi thuyết minh hết. […] Bây giờ thì em lên Youtube với các trang phim em tìm thấy phim nào nói tiếng Anh mà em thích thì em coi thôi ạ. Trước khoá học thì em không bao giờ lên YouTube coi phim.
> *[I think it <authentic materials> has grown on me since then because now when I watch movies at home, I use the subtitles so that I can listen to the characters talking in English. Before, I didn't pay attention to this and watched only the dubbed version. [...] Now I go to YouTube and other movies sites; I only look for English movies that I like to watch. Before the course I never watched them on YouTube.]*

These are surprising results considering the limited proficiency of the participant, which has undoubtedly restricted her from experiencing the materials.

Attitude Toward Authentic Materials and Proficiency Level

The difficulty of the materials is a concern shared among most participants, namely students Chi, Duong, Phuong, and Giao. Despite their agreement that this is an effective approach to learning English, Duong and Phuong were not sure whether it suited their current language level:

> Duong: Em thấy là với những người như em thì, thày biết đấy ạ, kiểu, cơ bản của em cũng yếu, với những người như em thì em nghĩ là vẫn nên học qua một vài giáo trình trước. Rồi mới học qua video như thế này thì sẽ tốt hơn. Em thấy học video như thế này thì phù hợp với những người đã có kiến thức cơ bản tốt rồi, là để nói một cách hay hơn. Chứ em phải loay hoay <trong lớp> rất nhiều vì từ vựng của em nó yếu.
> *[I think for people like me, you know, like, my foundational knowledge of English is weak, for people like me I think we should still learn from some textbooks first. Then we can go on to learn through videos like this, that'll work better. I think video-based courses like this are suitable for people already with a good language foundation so that they can speak better. For me, I had to struggle <during the course> a lot because I have a very weak vocabulary.]*

Chi and Giao are the only particpants who claimed not to have experienced any improvement in their attitude. Although Giao is no stranger to English media, she tends to stop concentrating when the topic of the video is not tailored to her interests, or when its difficulty level is beyond her comprehension:

> Giao: Có những video mà chủ đề mình thích, thấy hấp dẫn thì mình rất là thích để xem. Tuy nhiên cũng có rào cản là mình sẽ không thể hiểu được hết toàn bộ làm cho mình nản. Nếu mà có sub[titles] thì cũng không phải là lúc nào mình cũng hiểu hết được toàn bộ là người ta thực ra muốn nói gì. […] Cái bài mà học về đốt vàng mã. Nó toàn là từ mới […] Em không thích xem video đấy nữa.

[If the video is about something I'm interested in, I'd love to watch it. However, there's a barrier, which is that when I can't understand the language fully and that made me feel like giving up. Even when there are subtitles, sometimes I can't make out what they really meant. [...] The one about joss paper. It's all new vocabulary to me. [...] I don't feel like watching it anymore.]

This was unexpected. Similar to Hoa, Giao was one of the best and most hard-working students in class. During classes, she was attentive and never appeared distracted. In the questionnaires, she stated that she frequently watched videos in English and did not complain about the difficulty prior to the interview. Another point worth noticing is that the "joss paper" topic she mentioned was deliberately chosen as an unusual and potentially controversial topic that might spark cultural conflicts to see how culture-related debates may affect the students' willingness to raise opinions. Observation data shows that the other students responded well to this cultural challenge, openly reasoning for the pros and cons of their tradition. Some students, like An and Hoa, even appreciated the perspective discrepancy between Asians and Westerners on the matter.

Giao acknowledged the usefulness of the materials, seeing how talking in "chunks of words" learnt from the videos can help her speak more fluently: "Kể cả là em có biết hết các từ thì cũng rất mất thời gian để ghép thành câu từ những từ đấy. Nhưng mà khi học được cả cụm thì em có thể dùng những từ đấy luôn. [Even when I know every single word, it still takes a lot of time to make full sentences out of them. But when I can learn words in chunks, I can use those words right away]." Unlike the other students, however, Giao was not satisfied with the materials alone. She demanded more varied activities than just the 'lead-in video watching – group discussion' routine and would agree to follow this program only if lesson delivery were adjusted accordingly.

Continued Negative Attitude

Student Chi is the only one in the class who did not think this is a suitable method for her learning. She was among the weaker and quieter students. During the interview, she revealed that she used to try this method a long time ago and claimed that it did not work for her. Despite her belief that this is a good method, in both questionnaires, she was sure of her indifference towards the materials and watching videos in general. She stated that she did not understand them nor had the time to watch them. She was observed to be diligent and cooperative during class activities. However, the interview revealed that she was not satisfied and would prefer the language items to be explained in more detail:

Interviewer: Thế bạn cảm thấy là phương pháp trong lớp không phù hợp với bạn?
[So you feel that the class teaching methods don't suit you?]
Chi: Hiện giờ thì không ạ. Hiện tại thì em có đi học thêm cả tiếng Trung ấy ạ, thì em thấy là trong lúc cô dạy thì cô không chỉ nói là chữ này là chữ gì, mà nó có một cái ý nghĩa gốc gì sâu xa hơn để em có thể nhớ lâu hơn.
[For now they do not. I'm attending a Chinese language class too. The teacher shows me not just the surface meaning of each character, but also the in-depth, root concept it actually denotes, and so on, so that I can memorize it better.]

Positive Effects of Authentic Materials on Confidence

Four participants, namely An, Duong, Hoa, and even Chi, were certain that the materials had beneficial effects on their confidence to talk in class activities, despite their varied opinions about watching videos in English prior to the study. According to the interview, these were the primary reasons for this positive development: (1) They were amazed at how words can be combined into simple phrases to convey a wide range of meanings for daily conversations, and (2) they saw how native speakers communicate in real-life situations with natural pauses and mistakes. This consequently altered their perspectives. English to them now is not so much a subject of study to be held at a distance as an abstract ideal, but rather, a communicative tool to own and explore, similar to their mother tongue.

An was the most enthusiastic to talk about this improvement. He confirmed that he was no longer afraid of making mistakes while speaking: "bây giờ thì em cứ thế nói thôi, còn nếu họ không hiểu thì mình vẫn còn có body language cho họ hiểu. [now I just speak away, and if they don't understand me, there's always 'body language' to rely on.]" This change was most observable during the last two sessions of the course. I was surprised that instead of carefully looking up words in preparation for group talk activities as he did in previous sessions, An proactively teamed up with some of his classmates and initiated the conversation. He confirmed this in the interview:

> Interviewer: Mình có quan sát trong khoá học thấy là bạn bỏ ra khá nhiều thời gian để tra từ trước khi nói. Bạn cũng thường là phải chờ có người khởi đầu nói trước thì bạn mới nói, đúng không? <gật đầu>. Thế bây giờ thì bạn cảm thấy bản thân mình thế nào so với lúc đấy?
> *[So I observed during the course that you used to spend a considerable amount of time looking up words before you started talking. You also tended to wait for someone else to initiate the conversation for you, right? <nods> How do you feel about yourself now compared to that time?]*
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> An: Bây giờ thì em có thể chủ động nói với người khác hơn là để người ta hỏi mình rồi mới lại trả lời.
> *[Now I can initiate a conversation with other people rather than waiting for them to ask me something first.]*

Student Chi felt the same way, despite her uncertainty regarding the effects of the course on her learning. She claimed to have overcome her fear of making mistakes, and, like An, she was no longer too concerned about grammar when talking. Observational data shows that toward the end of the class, she was more responsive in the discussions. Although she was not seen starting any discussion yet, her speech flow was generally less disrupted with pauses.

Student Duong confirmed that the materials had made him form a better opinion of speaking than before. Furthermore, he felt encouraged to try out new language structures from the videos and was satisfied with the results, which in turn, propelled him to try harder. What was interesting about Duong was that his change in confidence was also most observable during the last two sessions, but for a different reason. Students Giao and Phuong had to be away on business and missed the last few class meetings; thus, only four attended the 7th class meetings (Giao attended the 8th). It was then that I noticed Duong's sudden liveliness. He took charge of conversations and hardly stopped to look up words anymore. Improvement in confidence was partly the reason, but he also added: "Đấy là do tính cách của em thôi. Không phải là ngại hay

gì cả. Em không thích đông người. [It's just my disposition. It's not really because I was shy or anything. I don't like to be with too many people.]" Not only that, but the course also encouraged him to spend time at home learning English. Besides Hoa, he was the only one who reported boosted motivation for practice outside the classroom.

It was difficult to observe Hoa's behavioral changes in confidence, if any, as she had been the leader of the class since the first day of the course, being a sociable, respected personality in the company. Indeed, Hoa was aware that she was the most confident student in the class, and thus she thought the change after such a short time was marginal for her. However, it did help her look at communicative English in a different light: *"Trước kia thì mình cứ dịch là word by word, và khi mình nói thì mình nghĩ trước khi mình nói [tiếng Anh]. Mình cứ làm phức tạp hoá lên như thế. Bây giờ thì mình hiểu là đôi khi cái diễn đạt nó chỉ rất là đơn giản thôi. [Before, I used to try to translate 'word by word' and I used to have to think before I started to say anything [in English]. I was overcomplicating things by doing that. I now understand that sometimes it can be very simple to express yourself].*" Besides, she was convinced that the materials were not the only factor, but the class atmosphere played an important role as well. This idea was seconded by An and Giao. The former appreciated how the class took him out of his comfort zone by forcing him to speak in a language they all were not familiar with, a feeling he described as "different" from when they talked in Vietnamese.

While Giao did not think the course helped with her confidence, emphasizing the role of varied class activities and class interaction, she was convinced that her fluency had improved thanks to the chunks of words she learned from the materials. This reflection of hers was partly supported by observational data, which shows that toward the end of the course, she no longer relied on her dictionary while speaking and started speaking in chunks. Her flow of speech, however, was still frequently disrupted by pauses. A likely factor to consider is that she missed 25% of class meeting time.

No Effects of Authentic Materials on Confidence
Phuong was the only one who did not think that her oral performance was affected. This is understandable, as compared to the rest of the class. She spent the shortest amount of time learning English before this course. Her missing 25% of class time was also a likely factor. She reported feeling fine surrounded by familiar faces, such as in this class, but stated that she would not do well in front of strangers. She was not afraid of making mistakes in class because her classmates could help her, but she was not sure that she would receive the same help when talking to strangers.

Discussion

Research Question 1: What are students' attitudes toward the use of authentic materials?

The findings of this project demonstrate generally positive results, albeit to different degrees. Overall, the students maintained positive attitudes towards the project and materials. All students (except for Chi, who was not sure of her decision) agreed to follow the project if it would be extended to be a long-term program, which reflects Raja's (2015) observation that adult classes that employ authentic materials tend to see lower dropout rates of students. According to Raja (2015), this is because such content manages to show students a direct link between the classroom environment and the language used in real-world contexts, which helps clarify their learning purposes, motivating them altogether. This is clearly illustrated in the context of this classroom. Four participants (An, Duong, Giao, and Hoa) highly appreciated the language aspect of the materials as good examples of real-life communication, especially when compared with the textbook (An, Giao, and Hoa). The topics of the videos, meanwhile, yielded some interesting outcomes. First, it can be seen that most students were open to discussing and giving different opinions on cultural beliefs. This seems in line with Truong and Tran's (2014) observation of Vietnamese students' general receptiveness to cultural differences. Second, Giao's viewpoint on what would capture her attention shows that comprehensibility is much more important to some students than the content itself. This has to do with language, topic choice, and topic introduction since unfamiliarity can cause students to lose interest. It is also likely that the difficulty of some of the materials was a primary reason for Chi's lack of focus. We can see from her interview data that Chi preferred a slower teaching approach in which the teacher is the traditional knowledge deliverer who helps her memory with a deeper analysis of each language item. A method that pushes students into immediately putting the language to use, such as in this project, might not suit her well. In the case of Phuong, the difficulty of authentic materials is an obstacle to her current proficiency level. This issue has been raised by Kelch (2011), Mudra (2014), and Hartatik and Rahmah (2016). Nevertheless, seeing how students at lower proficiency levels, such as Duong and Phuong, could be encouraged to be more autodidactic in learning English, I suggest future work be done to effectively introducing authentic materials to lower proficiency students.

Research Question 2: What are the effects of authentic materials on students' confidence in oral activities in class?

Regarding confidence as the main target of this innovation, the successful cases of the project can be mainly attributed to the materials' demonstration of natural language use, considering the improvement of not only the stronger students like An and Hoa but also those weaker, like Chi and Duong. This confirms Hartatik and Rahmah's (2016) findings. Although Chi was not convinced that the method suited her, she admitted that she was no longer too worried about grammar or afraid of making mistakes when speaking. This growth was partly accredited to the materials, which helped direct her focus to formulaic expressions and successful communication. This suggests further research into combinations of authentic materials with other teaching

methods to suit certain learning styles. This is probably also the case for Giao, who would like to see more dynamic class activities.

On the other hand, Duong's reaction followed a beneficial cycle reflected in Butler and Lumpe (2008) and Wu, Yen, and Marek (2011), who noted that successful attempts in practice can generate confidence, which strengthens one's passion for learning. The case of student Duong also raises further questions regarding how class size may affect each individual's performance. While the other students (An, Phuong, Giao, and Hoa) appreciated the interaction with and help from their classmates, Duong seemed observably more active when there were fewer people around him. Class rapport is thus another factor affecting the results of this project. Would someone like Duong do better in a smaller class, regardless of them being friends or strangers? We know that Phuong preferred to learn with people she was familiar with; otherwise, her confidence would vanish. This calls for research into students' confidence outside the classroom, which is not within the scope of this project.

Time probably had a significant impact on the outcomes of this study. First, considering the limited time span over which this project took place (16 hours of class meetings over four weeks), it is highly possible that the project has not yet reached its full potential. This may partly explain why it did not work as intended for some students. The shortage of time also put a constraint on observation as a data collection method. According to Hinchey (2008), observation requires a relatively long time to produce sufficient, reliable data. This is the greatest weakness of the method. Four weeks is not enough for the students to change or the method to record all patterns of behavior.

Class attendance policy should also be considered. Although I had full autonomy in class organization, it was understood that for the students, work must come before study. In other words, they had to miss class on that day if they were ever on duty. This may be a major factor that affected Phuong and Giao's experience, given the 25% of class time they missed at the end of the course. It is also worth noting that most participants only felt improvement at the end of the project, as shown in data triangulation.

Interaction between weaker and stronger students had been predicted to affect the participants' experience. It had been expected that the more fluent students would tend to dominate the conversations. As things turned out, however, the stronger students like Giao and Hoa had been most helpful. They initiated the conversations, helped their classmates with vocabulary, and encouraged them to talk. The weaker students observably enjoyed this friendly assistance. They tried to finish their part and actively sought help from others in the process. This is confirmed by the students' general emphasis on the importance of having classmates. Without this maturity, the class's overall experience might have been different.

The final factor to be discussed is student gender. While the sample size of this project is by no means large enough, it is worth noting that both male students at different proficiency levels reacted surprisingly well to the materials, while two of the four female students remained unconvinced. Assuming that this is not coincidental, topic choice is unlikely to be the cause of this discrepancy. Apart from a single deliberate topic choice to probe the impact of challenges to beliefs, all the discussions were based on basic, neutral topics such as food and reality shows.

Conclusion

This study has revealed key issues regarding the attitudes of a small group of students towards authentic materials and the effects of such materials on their confidence in class oral activities. Overall, it is clear that all the participants reacted positively to the use of audiovisuals materials in the classroom. They recognized and appreciated the practical aspect of learning from the language used for authentic communication. Most participants felt inspired by the materials to the point that they also paid more attention to practicing English at home. This attitude, however, can be adversely affected if the content of the materials fails to appeal to the student's interest. Therefore, it is advised that information regarding students' personalities and personal interests should be gathered beforehand, and the topics should be selected accordingly. The findings also suggest that young Vietnamese are generally open-minded and willing to discuss culturally controversial topics.

The effects of authentic materials on confidence vary among the participants. While two students reported remarkable improvement, two reported only a slight increase, and the others did not feel any difference. Several factors are thought to be the causes of this disparity. The most eminent among them are the short period of time over which this innovation took place, the comprehensibility of the materials, and each individual student's learning style. These insights gained from the research are invaluable for me as a teacher to optimize lesson delivery. Although it is impossible to appeal to each and every student's personal interests and personality, the study has shown that with appropriate approaches, authentic materials can be adapted to reach a wide range of students.

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