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## Exploring Authentic Materials as Catalysts for Learners' Motivation and Growth Mindset

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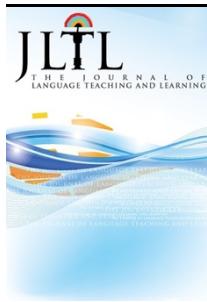
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# Exploring Authentic Materials as Catalysts for Learners' Motivation and Growth Mindset

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## ABSTRACT

While previous research has shown L2 motivation and language mindset as factors that could drive learners' positive emotions, the impact of materials-based interventions on these learning aspects is underexamined. The present study adapted newspapers and implemented activities to examine the impact of authentic materials on tertiary-level learners' motivation and language mindset concerning their L2 speaking skills over six weeks. A one-group pre-test post-test design was utilised since an intact classroom of 33 learners was chosen. Data was analysed quantitatively and qualitatively, employing the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test, the Paired-Samples T-Test, and the thematic analysis of interview data. Results revealed a significant positive impact of newspapers that enhanced their motivation and language mindset. The findings bear theoretical and practical implications as teachers can develop tasks around authentic materials to help learners develop their motivation and mindset concerning their speaking skills.

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The idea that authentic materials motivate learners and make learning more enjoyable has been endorsed by experts in the field (Allwright, 1981; Little & Singleton, 1988; Peacock, 1997). Positive emotions are always welcome in language learning even though negative emotions in language learning cannot be eliminated. Moreover, negative emotions such as language anxiety can prove facilitating if teachers help learners be more conscious of their L2 performance and develop their language skills (Haga & Reinders, 2021; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012) and positive emotions such as enjoyment, interest, and confidence.

The necessity of cultivating and contributing to positive environments, institutions, subjective feelings, and experiences among both language learners and teachers is well-established in scholarship (Wang et al., 2021). Therefore, this paper takes L2 motivation and growth mindset as two key aspects that can drive learners' speaking skills (Derakhshan & Fathi, 2024b; Wongsa & Son, 2020). Motivation and mindset are affective factors that can foster positive, desirable emotions in learning (Garrett, 2010). These two variables can positively and negatively impact learners' speaking skills as high levels of motivation keep them encouraged and a malleable language mindset leads to a growth mindset (Papi et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2015).

While motivation and language mindset have been extensively studied in L2 learning scenarios (Derakhshan & Fathi, 2024a; Derakhshan & Fathi, 2024b; Putra, 2017; Salehpour & Roohani, 2020; Solhi et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2020a; Zhang et al., 2020b), empirical evidence that shows how language learning materials influence them is scarcely found in the literature. Therefore, this study takes an experimental approach on an intact classroom with one group pre-test post-test design through which L2 learners' motivation and language mindset in speaking activities are measured before and after the use of authentic materials in classrooms. Additionally, research on authentic materials often elucidates the positive beliefs of learners and teachers on the use of such materials (Hartatik & Rahmah, 2016; Mandasari, 2016) and only a handful of them directly assess these materials' impact on learners' language skills and emotions (Kung, 2017;

Namaziandost et al., 2021). In this study, newspapers are chosen as authentic materials since they represent a variety of genres such as articles, pictures, and recipes. The paper also intends to understand the impact of such authentic materials on their motivation and mindset while learners are engaged in speaking activities. The findings reveal that authentic materials are vested with the potential to pique learners' interest, motivate learners, and enhance their language mindset associated with their L2 speaking skills.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Motivation

As a set of processes that shape and retain learners' involvement in learning (Ushioda, 2001), motivation is a well-researched aspect of language learning with a history of sixty years (Al-Hoorie, 2017). The letter 'M' in the EMPATHICS vision by Oxford (2016) signifies motivation and meaning in life, which is a requisite in whatever one wishes to do or achieve in life. As a situation-specific, dynamic complex system (Sampson, 2020), motivation is a positive construct in language learning since learning for a longer period cannot happen without motivation (Barzegar & Sadr, 2013; Gregersen, 2019). Studies that measured the motivation of language learners using self-report questionnaires invariably correlated motivation with emotions such as anxiety (Kruk, 2016; Liu & Huang, 2011), enjoyment (Dewaele et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2020b), boredom (Solhi et al., 2024), willingness to communicate (Alrabai, 2022; Kruk, 2022; Nikitina et al., 2022), emotional dimensions of young adult learners (Pavelescu, 2019), and with language skills such as speaking (Dincer & Yesilyurt, 2017; Ihsan, 2016; Salehpour & Roohani, 2020; Tampubolon, 2018).

Furthermore, in language learning, Gardner (1985) has established that individuals driven by intrinsic motivation learn it due to an internal desire to use the language and enhance proficiency, while those driven by extrinsic motivation learn the language to earn status and benefits. Additionally, Dörnyei (2009; 2014) identified the Ideal L2 Self, the

Ought-to L2 Self, and the L2 Learning Experiences as three major motivation variables. The Ideal L2 Self is associated with learners' vision of being a proficient language user, which becomes a great motivational factor to develop language skills if they observe a difference between their ideal state and the current state (Dörnyei, 2014). The Ought-to L2 Self thinks that one should have certain traits and qualities to meet other people's expectations, which then motivates people to learn and develop their language skills to avoid negative consequences (Dörnyei, 2009). As a third factor, the L2 Learning Experiences is concerned with the motivation that the learner garners from the classroom environment, past experiences, peers, and achievements (Dörnyei, 2014). Research shows that the Ideal L2 self influences learners' motivation more than the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experiences (Islam et al., 2013; Rajab et al., 2012; Taguchi et al., 2009), thereby emphasising the role of self-confidence and learners' perceptions about themselves on motivation and learning.

Motivation is an inimitable element in language learning that can predict whether a learner can sustain their interest in learning during frustrating times. In terms of L2 speaking skills, learners are susceptible to negative emotions such as anxiety, frustration, low self-efficacy, and low confidence. Moreover, positive emotions and feelings such as optimism, confidence, well-being, and empathy are important to sustain long-term motivation and render learning successful (MacIntyre et al., 2019).

Additionally, the immediate classroom environment of learners, including the teacher-learner relationship, peers, and learning opportunities constitute their L2 learning experience, which is a third factor in the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2009). It has been identified that providing opportunities for using the language is imperative to enable learning (Pride, 1979), which can be realised through textbooks and materials (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018). Zare and Aqajani Delavar (2022) utilised a mixed-methods study to establish how discovery learning in authentic tasks enhanced learners' motivation. A quasi-experimental design was also employed by Alamer and Al Khateeb (2021) to

identify the importance of fostering learner autonomy and familiarity with materials to improve learners' motivation levels. Similarly, studies have indicated the necessity to utilise authentic materials to sustain learners' motivation in the classroom by capturing their interest and enthusiasm (Kienbaum et al., 1986; Namaziandost et al., 2019; Namaziandost et al., 2021; Peacock, 1997).

## 2.2. Growth Mindset

Corollary to motivation, the concept of growth mindset stresses the need to rise above limitations and hardships. Those with a growth mindset believe in their abilities and the malleability of these abilities, which can be improved and modified through practice and effort, while those with a fixed mindset believe in the stable nature of intelligence and abilities (Dweck, 1999; Dweck, 2017; Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Individuals with a growth mindset accept challenges and are strongly motivated. It is underpinned by Weiner's Attribution Theory, according to which individuals relate their successes and failures to controllable factors such as their efforts more than their innate abilities (Weiner, 1985). As a context-dependent factor (Yeager & Dweck, 2020), growth mindset is also found to be a strong predictor of motivation among learners (Cacali, 2019; Dweck et al., 2014). Moreover, mindset fluctuates from one learner to another, and learners have a mixed language mindset rather than having one mindset alone (Lou et al., 2022). It can also influence learners' positive emotions, such as enjoyment, classroom engagement, and the rapport they have with teachers and peers (Derakhshan et al., 2022).

Additionally, Papi et al. (2019) have argued that a growth mindset can reduce the impact of speaking anxiety, as learners with such a language mindset see opportunities to speak as positively challenging. Recently, Derakhshan and Fathi (2024b) studied how self-efficacy, growth mindset, and self-regulation work together to predict speaking proficiency among EFL learners and reiterated the necessity of raising positive beliefs and emotions among learners. In previous research, through structural equation modelling, mindset has been

studied as an aspect that influences grit, perseverance, and learning processes (Kırmızı et al., 2023), which underscores the importance of having interventions that help learners develop a growth mindset. In another study, Lou et al. (2017) established that language learners' mindset has a significant correlation with their intrinsic motivation. A path analysis was employed by Zarrinabadi et al. (2021) to identify the strong relationship between language mindset and L2 pragmatic behaviours, with this relation being mediated by motivation. In another study, Ciaccio (2019) argued that learners with a growth mindset attribute negative experiences in language learning to their lack of determination and are ready to work hard for achievements.

### 2.3. *Authentic materials*

Classroom interventions that aim to enhance positive emotions and the well-being of learners and teachers are necessary (MacIntyre et al., 2019). Seligman et al. (2009) conducted an intervention programme among 347 learners and identified the experimental group exhibiting more enjoyment and engagement than the control group. Gregersen et al. (2014) also reported the positive outcomes of emotional intelligence (EI) interventions they conducted on a teacher and a learner. In a related study, an EI intervention programme was conducted in which activities helped learners to identify their emotional experiences and improve their emotional skills. It is indicated that interventions of the current period are aimed at developing and enhancing the positive emotions of learners rather than linguistic outcomes (Dewaele et al., 2019). These interventions that aim to help learners cultivate positive emotions can be in the form of teacher immediacy (Pourgharib & Shakki, 2024), web-based activities (Son, 2014; Wang, 2014), and materials (Abdolrezapour & Tavakoli, 2011; Kung, 2017). Among these, authentic materials have been proposed as possible interventions that can raise learners' motivation levels, interest, curiosity, and communicative competence as they provide rich exposure to the L2 used in the real world (Hartatik & Rahmah, 2016; Rao, 2019).

Authentic materials are texts that are not prepared to meet the language teaching purpose in a classroom (Nunan, 1989), as they enable communication (Tomlinson, 2013) and serve a social purpose in the community in which they are produced (Little et al., 1989). Authentic materials such as newspapers, films, podcasts, and recipes represent the use of language in the real world, unlike pedagogically designed textbooks with isolated exercises for learners' practice. However, the concepts of 'authentic' and 'authenticity' are highly debated in scholarship. According to Tomlinson (2017), textbooks are not authentic as they are simplified to enable learning and not communication. Furthermore, a text qualifies itself as authentic when it proves engaging for learners and exposes them to different genres of text (Morrow & Schocker, 1987; Tomlinson, 2017). While Porter and Roberts (1981) consider authenticity in terms of the language produced by L1 speakers, Tomlinson (2012) and Mishan (2017) maintain that these materials do not have to be produced by L1 speakers, as authenticity emerges with learners' interactions with the text and a genuine need for communication.

Research on authentic materials is a relevant feat to undertake in contexts where the prescribed textbooks and coursebooks that are specifically curated for L2 learning and teaching appear wanting in novelty. It is argued that textbooks represent the English language in an artificial way (Berardo, 2006), which can negatively affect the motivation levels of learners. Moreover, authentic materials can always be incorporated into the classroom discourse for their positive impact on learners (Peacock, 1997; Sari, 2016). Through experimental studies, Kung (2017) identified the value of authentic reading materials in enhancing learners' reading comprehension and motivation, while Namaziandost et al. (2021) emphasised the role of authentic materials in enhancing learners' reading motivation and reducing their anxiety.

In light of the literature review, it can be deduced that studies on L2 motivation, language mindset, and the positive relation between motivation and language mindset are constantly developing the stream of ESL research. The present study is an

attempt to add to the extant literature on these areas by adding the dimension of intervention. It specifically focuses on learners' motivation and mindset related to their speaking skills for its prioritisation among learners as a necessary skill to be performed in global scenarios (Kumar, 2021; Richards & Renandya, 2002). The authentic materials chosen in the study are newspapers, which are not only familiar to learners but are also a source through which they receive exposure to several genres and text types (Tomlinson, 2013), such as recipes, advertisements, and articles. Existing studies have chosen reading passages (Kung, 2017; Namaziandost et al., 2019; Namaziandost et al., 2021), sitcoms (Khabir et al., 2022), and oral authentic materials (Badri & Salehi, 2017) to explore learners' reading skills, intercultural competence, and listening skills. While Beresova (2015) employed newspapers at the tertiary level to focus on learners' cultural awareness and vocabulary acquisition, empirical evidence on the potential of authentic materials in influencing the affective variables that impact their L2 speaking abilities is less explored. Correspondingly, this study utilises a mixed-methods approach to measure the impact of authentic materials on the L2 speaking motivation and growth mindset of a classroom of 33 tertiary-level learners. The following research questions guide the study:

1. What is the impact of authentic materials on L2 learners' motivation and language mindset concerning their speaking skills?
2. In what way can authentic materials enhance learners' L2 motivation and language mindset?

### **3. Methodology**

#### *3.1 Context and Participants*

The study employs a mixed-methods approach that combines both quantitative and qualitative data. This approach strengthens the results and findings of the study as statistical data can be buttressed by the opinions and personal experiences that the learners provide through interviews (Plano Clark, 2017). While the previously validated

questionnaires measured the learners' perceptions of their L2 motivation and growth mindset before and after the interventions, the semi-structured interview helped in gaining deeper insights into their experiences and opinions on the activities and their overall participation. Additionally, employing both quantitative and qualitative methods complements the findings of a study (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2015). Since statistical results alone would not help identify the difficulties that learners faced in activities, thematic results would reveal further information about the perspectives and reflections that learners had regarding the materials and their adaptation in the classroom. Quantitative data was collected first to discern the pattern of their responses in terms of their motivation and mindset. It was followed by qualitative data, which helped in delving deeper into their experiences that they narrated in their own words.

The participants were 33 second-year undergraduate learners pursuing a business administration course in a college in India, where English is taught as a second language. Since they have been learning English for at least the past ten years, it was assumed they had prior grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation knowledge. All the learners agreed to be a part of the study. Participants' ages had a mean of 19.52 (range=19-20, SD= 0.508). As part of the research, demographic details including gender, year of study, course names, religion, caste, and social class were also collected.

#### *3.2 Materials and Measures*

Since the interventions were carried out in an intact classroom, the study found assigning a control group as non-feasible and therefore chose a one-group pre-test post-test research design, which can provide insights into the possibilities of an intervention in a particular context (Marsden & Torgerson, 2012). For the quantitative data collection, existing scales were adopted for the study. To measure learners' L2 motivation, the Student Motivational State Questionnaire developed by Papi and Abdollahzadeh (2011) was adopted. Additionally, their growth mindset was

measured using the Language Mindsets Inventory developed by Lou and Noels (2017). Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which were conducted before and after the intervention.

#### *Student Motivational State Questionnaire*

The Student Motivational State Questionnaire (Papi & Abdollahzadeh, 2011) is a 35-item questionnaire on a 6-point Likert scale (1= Strongly disagree; 2= Moderately disagree; 3= Slightly disagree; 4= Slightly agree; 5= Moderately agree; 6= Strongly agree). It has subscales such as the Ideal L2 Self Scale, Ought-to Self Scale, English Learning Experience Scale, Motivational Intensity Scale, and Linguistic Self-Confidence Scale. The original items were retained without any changes (Appendix A). Table 1 provides Cronbach's coefficient alpha for L2

motivation before and after the interventions. The scale was found to be reliable for this study.

#### *Language Mindset Inventory*

This inventory, developed by Lou and Noels (2017), is an 18-item questionnaire measured on a 6-point Likert scale (1= Strongly disagree; 2= Moderately disagree; 3= Slightly disagree; 4= Slightly agree; 5= Moderately agree; 6= Strongly agree). It has three subscales, including General Language Intelligence Beliefs, Second Language Aptitude Beliefs (L2B), and Age Sensitivity Beliefs about Language Learning. The questions were retained without any modifications (Appendix A). Cronbach's coefficient alpha for the variable before and after the interventions is given in Table 1, as per which the scale was found to be reliable for the study.

Table 1  
Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha for the Variables

Variables	Subscales	Number of items	Pre-intervention	Post-intervention
Motivation	Ideal L2 self	8	0.711	0.707
	Ought-to L2 self	8	0.763	0.706
	English learning experience	6	0.765	0.726
	Motivational intensity	6	0.752	0.711
	Linguistic self- confidence	7	0.824	0.728
	General language intelligence beliefs	6	0.719	0.701
	Second language aptitude beliefs	6	0.753	0.745
	Age sensitivity beliefs	6	0.745	0.709

#### *Authentic Materials*

Tasks and activities designed out of authentic materials were also used as tools. The choice of authentic materials was guided by the criteria already established by Nuttal (1996), which include sustainability of content or how materials capture, sustain, and suit the interests and needs of learners, exploitability or the practical application of the text's purpose, and readability or the level of complexity that learners can deal with. Since the study involved interventions, care was taken to pay attention to individual learners as individualisation

is recognised as a decisive factor that determines the success of interventions (Gregerson et al., 2016). Additionally, careful considerations were made to choose an authentic material and design activities out of it that were interactive and relevant to them. Towards this end, newspapers were chosen as the variety of articles, information, and pictures in newspapers could capture learners' interest and fit the complexity level that tertiary-level learners could deal with (Nuttall, 1996). Apart from the fact that newspapers proved adaptable for activities such as discussions and role-plays, they represent authenticity as envisaged by Tomlinson (2017) as

they expose learners to different text types and genres, and exist in print and online formats.

The successful use and implementation of authentic materials in classrooms are dependent on their language-rich inputs (Ellis, 1999). Additionally, task authenticity is ensured when meaningful activities that help learners communicate in the target language are provided in such a way that they have replicative value in the real world (Tomlinson, 2017). For example, introducing oneself, participating in group discussions, prioritising choices, giving and taking instructions, etc., are some of the speaking sub-skills that learners will encounter in the real world, which can be simulated in classrooms. As an adaptation of authentic materials in the form of tasks and activities is necessary, four activities were designed out of different sections of a newspaper such as advertisements, recipes, and articles.

### *Semi-structured Interviews*

Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with six learners before and after the intervention to strengthen the quantitative data and to procure learners' opinions on the activities and the materials. Learners' participation in the interviews was voluntary. The interview protocol is provided in Appendix D.

### *3.3 Data Collection Procedure*

The data for this study were collected from learner participants in four phases over one and a half months. In the first phase, questionnaires were administered. The learners were also interviewed separately to collect their opinions and thoughts on their motivation levels and growth mindset. The second phase involved designing tasks and activities based on the articles and advertisements in newspapers (Appendix B & C). The third phase involved the execution of four activities designed as interventions to be implemented across four weeks and to prompt the learner participants to speak. The difficulty and simplicity levels of the activities were gauged by directly asking the learners to see if the activities required changes. Among the four

activities, one activity was dubbed *too simple* by them. Accordingly, the activity was modified to make it more challenging for them. In the fourth phase, questionnaires were readministered. They were interviewed again after a week to collect their opinions on the activities and the perceived impact. Figure 1 presents the procedure of data collection.

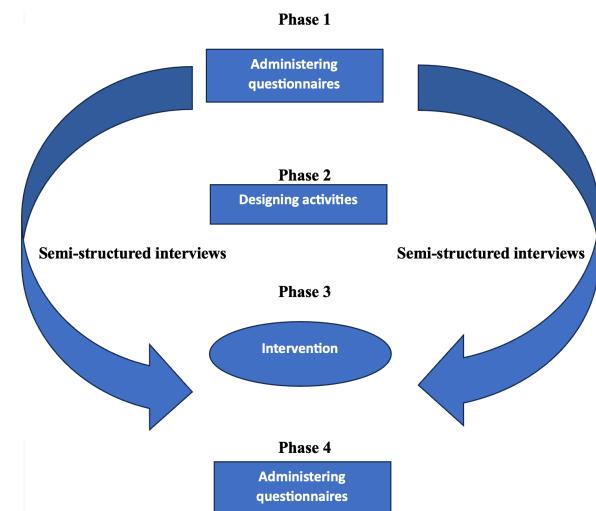


Figure 1  
Data collection procedure

### *3.4 Data Analysis*

Quantitative data were statistically analysed using SPSS version 25 for the scores obtained during pre-intervention and post-intervention periods. Descriptive statistics for the variables, along with their normality test, were assessed. Since the study has a paired sample design with dependent data collected from the same group at different periods, a two-sample Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test is used as the non-parametric test in place of the t-test (Bluman, 2014). Given the objective of the research to understand the impact of authentic materials on their motivation and growth mindset concerning speaking skills, this test proves relevant in comparing the scores.

Additionally, the qualitative data collected from six learner participants through semi-structured interviews (Appendix D) were coded using thematic analysis. This method was chosen as the study was data-driven and intended the themes to

emerge from the data. In the post-intervention phase, which was conducted two weeks after the interventions, the six learners who participated before were chosen again for the interview to keep the credibility of the data and to aid meaningful interpretations. The participants were vocal in expressing their opinions, experiences, and concerns. The participants' opinions and experiences were written down and labelled for identification. The analysis followed the six steps prescribed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which included familiarising oneself with the data, initial coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, refining them through naming, and reporting themes based on the research questions. Before reporting the findings by collocating them with those from the quantitative data, member checking was carried out as a crucial step in qualitative research to enhance the accuracy and validity of its interpretations (Bazeley, 2020).

The interview data were collected in written form to activate prior knowledge and enable familiarisation. In the second phase, initial codes were generated by reading and re-reading the data to identify interesting ideas. For instance, a learner reported in the pre-intervention interview:

L3: *"It's too difficult for me to think of standing in front of people and talk in a language that I don't know really well. I can speak in my mother tongue whatever topic you give me but English give me the vibe of foreigners."*

From this excerpt, codes such as 'shyness' 'foreignness,' and 'a lack of familiarity' emerged. Once the coding process ended, the search for themes and theme development began by thoroughly reading the generated codes. For instance, the initial codes and similar codes qualified as the theme 'Challenges.' In the fourth step of reviewing the themes, certain codes could not qualify as themes. For example, in the pre-intervention excerpt:

L2: *"I talk to myself in English. I practise this since fifth or sixth class."*

Here, codes such as 'creativity' and 'self-encouragement' were generated. However, similar codes did not emerge from other data sets due to which they had to be collapsed under the theme

'Strategies.' The naming of themes was completed based on the thematic patterns and how they could be related to the research questions. For example, the theme 'Beliefs in development' was predicated on learners' growth mindset which came from the pre-intervention excerpt:

L5: *"My marks for English was high in schools. It is low here at the college. But I see my classmates going abroad and speaking English very fluently. Maybe I can also speak if I speak to foreigners every day"* and post-intervention excerpt *"The activities offered me a space to speak. Practice is something I lack. When the task begins, I am scared. But I pick up speed as I speak more. I will speak if I get chances."*

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Results for Quantitative Data

Primarily, descriptive statistics were run for pre-intervention motivation ( $M= 122.12$ ,  $SD= 6.528$ ), post-intervention motivation ( $M= 158.85$ ,  $SD= 6.027$ ), pre-intervention mindset ( $M= 61.21$ ,  $SD= 3.533$ ), and post-intervention mindset ( $M= 75.48$ ,  $SD= 4.678$ ) (Table 2). A Shapiro-Wilk test was also conducted, which did not report any significant departures from normality as  $p> 0.05$  for pre-intervention motivation scores ( $W= 0.950$ ,  $p= 0.136$ ), post-intervention motivation scores ( $W= 0.953$ ,  $p= 0.163$ ), pre-intervention language mindset scores ( $W= 0.962$ ,  $p= 0.296$ ), and post-intervention language mindset scores ( $W= 0.940$ ,  $p= 0.066$ ) (Table 3). As shown in Table 4, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test yielded post-intervention as having a higher statistically significant score for both motivation ( $Z= -5.015$ ,  $p< 0.000$ ) and mindset ( $Z= -5.021$ ,  $p< 0.000$ ) when compared to their pre-intervention scores. Since the data did not show any evidence to prove deviation from normality, a Paired Sample T-Test was also conducted as a parametric test to establish the robustness and reliability of the findings. Combined use of parametric and non-parametric tests would also strengthen the finding that there is a significant difference between the pre-intervention and post-intervention phases (Wey et al., 2015). Accordingly, the test also derived a statistically significant  $p$ -value ( $p= 0.000$ ) for the

differences in the paired scores and reported the mean difference for postintervention motivation-preintervention motivation ( $M= 36.727$ ) and postintervention mindset-preintervention mindset ( $M= 14.273$ ) (Table 5). Furthermore, the percentage of change imparted through the intervention was calculated, which showed  $r= 0.87$  for motivation and

$r= 0.87$  for growth mindset. These results are interpreted according to the conventions for effect size prescribed by Cohen (2013), according to which the effect size coefficient greater than 0.25 is deemed large.

Table 2  
Descriptive Statistics of Pre-intervention and Post-intervention Scores

Variables	Pre-intervention		Post-intervention		N
	M	SD	M	SD	
Motivation	122.12	6.528	158.85	6.027	33
Language	61.21	3.533	75.48	4.678	33
Mindset					

Table 3  
Results of Shapiro Wilk Test for Normality Assumption

Variable	W	Df	Sig.
Pre-intervention motivation	0.950	33	0.136
Pre-intervention language	0.953	33	0.163
mindset			
Post-intervention motivation	0.962	33	0.296
Post-intervention language	0.940	33	0.066
mindset			

Table 4  
Results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test for the Differences Between Pre-intervention and Post-intervention Scores for Motivation and Language Mindset

Variable	Pre-intervention	Post-intervention	Z	Sig.	Cohen's r
	median	median			
Motivation	121	160	-5.015	0.000	0.87
Language	61	75	-5.021	0.000	0.87
Mindset					

Table 5

Results of the Paired Sample T-Test Comparing Pre-Intervention and Post-Intervention Scores for Motivation and Language Mindset

Variable	Pre-intervention mean	Post-intervention mean	Mean difference	t-value	Df	Sig.
Motivation	122.12	158.85	36.727	22.626	32	0.000
Language Mindset	61.21	75.48	14.273	19.118	32	0.000

#### 4.2 Results for Qualitative Data

Qualitative data were collected twice through semi-structured interviews with six learners who volunteered to participate. In the pre-intervention phase, they were asked to explain their reasons for learning English, the language skills they thought they needed improvement in, classroom materials, the materials they used to learn, and their hopes for improving their speaking skills. In the post-intervention phase, they were asked similar questions as before, with an urge to report any change they observed in themselves during the interventions.

The written transcripts were thoroughly read before initial coding. Once the recurrent patterns were found, they were classified into themes and then compared with the codes to check for consistency (Appendix E). By analysing the data, seven themes emerged that reflected the learners' speaking experiences, fears, and aspirations. These themes were also reflective of their motivation and growth mindset concerning L2 speaking skills.

##### *Theme 1: Speaking*

In the pre-intervention phase, the learner participants expressed their concerns about their L2 speaking skills. While they mentioned that they could confidently write about themselves in English, they would hesitate to give a self-introduction by speaking. Additionally, their desire to improve themselves was evident from the interview. The idea that L2 speaking should be free from grammatical mistakes made a participant avoid opportunities in school, such as debates and

extempore speech competitions. After the intervention, the participants reported that the activities encouraged them to express themselves through speaking. Despite the initial inhibitions and fears, they mentioned that as the activities progressed, they were able to plan and speak more than they thought they could. Since the activities stimulated them to participate and speak, the learners felt satisfied with what they could do.

##### *Theme 2: Challenges*

When asked to express what they feel about their speaking skills, the learners expressed their fears about speaking. These challenges were classified as speaking anxiety, as they experienced fear of judgment from peers and teachers. The learners also stated that they would like to overcome these challenges. In the post-intervention phase, some learners opined that the activities designed out of the newspapers gave them opportunities to speak, and they realised that they could overcome some of their fears if they persisted. However, one of the participants maintained that speaking gave them palpitations. The participant was unsure whether the anxiety-inducing feeling subsided as the activity progressed.

##### *Theme 3: Strategies*

In the pre-intervention phase, the learners expressed another concern about their ability to use known vocabulary when necessary. They suggested some of the strategies that they use to improve their grammar and vocabulary, such as reading dictionaries. Despite knowing several words and

their meanings, they knew they could not use the words in appropriate situations. From their opinions, it was evident that they had fewer opportunities to utilise their receptive knowledge. Later, in the post-intervention phase, the learner participants reported their need to have more opportunities that amply gave them time and proper scaffolding to encourage their speaking. Though they did not think they could utilise new words during the speaking activities, they believed that further opportunities in the classroom could prove beneficial for them.

#### *Theme 4: Limitations of Textbooks*

During the pre-intervention interviews, learners mentioned that they found their prescribed textbooks boring. They also stated that the textbooks did not provide them with opportunities to speak in English in the classroom. One of the learners also said that they read textbooks only when examinations approach. This also meant that they considered the usefulness of textbooks from the perspective of examinations. In the post-intervention phase, the participants stated that using newspapers in the classroom proved refreshing, as they were used to reading textbooks and listening to what the teachers taught. Since they were familiar with recipes, advertisements, and articles in newspapers, they enjoyed the activities based on the materials.

#### *Theme 5: Extramural*

When asked what materials they were familiar with for learning besides textbooks, the learners mentioned using YouTube and ChatGPT to complete assignments and prepare for examinations. They were not familiar with the use of newspapers, bills, or instruction manuals as possible teaching and learning materials. Their dependence and boredom with textbooks were evident here; however, their use of YouTube and ChatGPT also revealed how technology assisted in their extramural learning. Again, in the post-intervention phase, the learners exclaimed that they liked learning the language from other familiar

resources such as newspapers. They expressed their readiness to see how these materials can be used in addition to textbooks. Some of them also stated that they have a habit of reading the subtitles of English films to understand what the characters say and learn new words.

#### *Theme 6: Beliefs in Development*

Initially, the learner participants expressed their lack of confidence in initiating conversations or even responding to others in English. Some of the learners were less optimistic about the implementation of activities and how participation in such activities could help them in speaking. This invariably indicated a lack of growth mindset. However, the post-intervention phase saw the learners changing their opinions surrounding self-doubts and thoughts of inadequacy. Though they were aware that they made mistakes, they expressed their desire to participate in such activities that would help them speak. Notwithstanding, one learner appeared worried as they stated that they were unable to participate according to the instructions given for the activity. Even though the time given for each activity was found sufficient by the learner, they said that they did not know how to approach a task such as the Fish Bowl discussion.

#### *Theme 7: Motivation*

The pre-intervention interview saw some learners predicting how they would behave when they participated in speaking activities. They said they might remain silent or might feel stuck while speaking. This signalled low levels of motivation among the participants. However, in the post-intervention interview, they expressed their eagerness to participate in activities of a similar nature as they felt motivated to speak in English, which they thought they could not do initially. One of the major factors that motivated them was the themes of the activities, which ranged from talking about themselves to talking about a social issue. Another major factor was the nature of the activities, which included both individual and pair work.

Overall, the qualitative analysis showed a positive spike in the motivation and growth mindset levels of the learner participants. Their responses also showed that the materials and activities were engaging and intriguing for them.

## 5. Findings and Discussion

### 5.1. Findings from the Results of Quantitative Data Analysis

In alignment with the first research question, which was to understand the impact of authentic materials on learners' motivation and language mindset, the quantitative data analysis revealed a positive impact on their motivation and growth mindset. The results from the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test (Table 4) prove this claim as the paired data collected before and after the interventions are different, with the score for motivation ( $Z= -5.015$ ,  $p< 0.000$ ) and mindset ( $Z= -5.021$ ,  $p< 0.000$ ) showing an increase after the interventions. Additionally, with a p-value less than 0.05, the difference between the scores for both variables indicates a strong statistical significance, thereby evidencing a strong impact of authentic materials.

Furthermore, to answer the second research question, which was to understand how authentic materials enhanced motivation and mindset, the difference between the pre-intervention motivation, post-intervention motivation, pre-intervention language mindset, and post-intervention language mindset variables was calculated, revealing positive scores. The results were further strengthened through a Paired Sample T-Test (Table 5), which not only corroborated a statistically significant p-value ( $p< 0.000$ ) for the difference in scores but also showed a positive mean difference for postintervention motivation-preintervention motivation ( $M= 36.727$ ) and postintervention mindset-preintervention mindset ( $M= 14.273$ ). The mean value confirms that the intervention led to an enhancement of the learners' L2 motivation and growth mindset related to speaking.

The study was also interested in knowing the percentage of change that the positive intervention brought. The effect size was calculated as  $r= 0.87$  for

motivation and  $r= 0.87$  for mindset (Table 4). While applying Cohen's (2013) conventions,  $r=0.87$  for both motivation and mindset is interpreted as having a large size as the coefficient is greater than 0.25. The similar values of effect size for both variables suggest a possible relationship and interconnectedness between motivation and growth mindset. It has been identified that learners who have a growth mindset also exhibit high levels of motivation (Waller & Papi, 2017). Moreover, language mindsets have a crucial role in driving learners' motivation levels that influence language learning (Cacali, 2019; Dweck et al., 2014; Zarrinabadi et al., 2021). The similar effect size for motivation and growth mindset in this study also indicates the consistency of impact and how the adapted authentic material simultaneously influences the psychological constructs. This further establishes the interrelation between motivation and growth mindset as the adapted newspapers enhanced learners' beliefs in improving themselves and encouraged their motivation to participate and engage in the activities. Additionally, an effect size of 0.87 is considerably large for both variables, which also enhances the scope of the reusability and adaptability of the materials among other learner groups.

Furthermore, the interventions used in this study were speaking activities. The low motivation levels of some learners considerably increased after the intervention. The reasons for low levels of motivation can be anxiety, negative experiences, lack of support, and a feeling that speaking is a difficult task (Clément, 1980; Papi, 2010; Teimouri, 2017). Even though investigations of learners' beliefs in the use of authentic materials record their eagerness to use such materials in language classrooms (Hartatik & Rahmah, 2016; Mandasari, 2016), some learners found participation in activities challenging. Since authentic materials could prove difficult for learners (Widdowson, 1984), the content delivered in the classroom was aligned with their local realities, and activities were scaffolded to counter issues related to vocabulary. Notwithstanding, some learners resisted the Fish Bowl Discussion activity in which they were expected to speak about casteism and

discriminatory practices (Appendix B & C). They cited anxiety in speaking as a major hindrance that they faced. The learners who faced challenges in speaking also participated in the post-intervention interview, during which they opined that they were not fully satisfied with their performance in the discussion activity due to anxiety and a feeling of their minds going blank. These learners experienced task-specific anxiety as they successfully participated in other activities. The need to attend to learners' task-specific anxiety emerged as a crucial factor while implementing authentic materials in classrooms.

Additionally, Lee and Lin (2019) have highlighted the importance of using L2 motivational strategies in classrooms, among which engaging learners in tasks and activities using authentic materials is deemed successful. The findings are also consistent with several experimental studies that used authentic materials. Belet Boyaci and Güner (2018) reported an increase in the motivational levels of learners when authentic materials were used for reading skills, while Barekat and Nobakhti (2014) identified improvements in the listening skills of learners. Nomura and Yuan (2018) also propose learning by doing through authentic materials to help learners improve their skills with an emphasis on providing authentic situations to learners. It is also recommended to incorporate authentic materials to improve the speaking skills of learners (Namaziandost, 2021) as they are relevant to learners' lives (Kung, 2017).

With a considerable increase in motivation, mindset also showed a spike as the learners who reported fixed language mindsets inclined towards a mindset to develop speaking skills. Since growth mindset is directly related to motivation, anxiety, and willingness to communicate (WTC) that could impact speaking skills, the positive impact of authentic materials on learners' growth mindset validates the use of such materials in classrooms. For instance, a study that investigated the influence of growth mindset on WTC confirmed its positive association along with the outcome that learners with positive beliefs about the malleability of their abilities exhibit less anxiety (Hejazi et al., 2023). The fact that growth mindset is context-dependent

(Yeager & Dweck, 2020) indicates that it can fluctuate and can be developed with learners as the beneficiaries.

### 5.1. Findings from the Results of Qualitative Data Analysis

A thematic analysis of the qualitative data further revealed learners' positive perceptions of the interventions using authentic materials. Seven themes emerged from the thematic analysis, which included *Fear*, *Challenges*, *Strategies*, *Limitations of textbooks*, *Extramural*, *Beliefs in development*, and *Motivation* (Appendix E). Semi-structured interviews that were conducted before and after the interventions also revealed a trajectory from a demotivated mindset to a motivated and positive mindset. The initial perception that learners had was inhibition and fear, which they expressed at the onset. However, they maintained that they could navigate through their fears and anxiety as the activities progressed. The learners also claimed that authentic materials offered them fresh opportunities and prompts when compared to textbooks that were boring and less interesting. They preferred extramural and incidental learning through YouTube videos and watching English movies with subtitles. Notwithstanding, the thematic analysis also revealed the difficulty that some learners face during the activities which reiterated the need to attend to their task-specific anxiety.

These findings corroborated the results generated from the statistical analysis, thereby revealing the positive impact of the interventions along with the direction of the impact, which showed an increase in the participants' motivation levels and positive growth mindset. Furthermore, the results build on earlier studies that explored only the beliefs of learners and teachers in using authentic materials (Hartatik & Rahmah, 2016; Rehman & Perveen, 2021) as this study goes further to materialise their beliefs through interventions and then measures learners' perceptions. As evidenced by a recent study, experiential learning is preferred by learners as they receive exposure to authentic language and engage in interactions, both

of which are promoted by authentic materials (Sharhan & Janfeshan, 2024).

The findings of the study support Dörnyei's (2009; 2014) L2 Motivational Self System as the learners' desire to speak and utilise the opportunities was propelled by their vision of becoming fluent L2 speakers. Despite the previous findings that the Ideal L2 Self influences motivation more than Ought-to-Self and L2 Learning Experiences (Islam et al., 2013; Rajab et al., 2012; Taguchi et al., 2009), the present study also establishes the decisive role of L2 Learning Experiences on learners' motivation indicated by the use of authentic materials and authentic tasks that bear relevance to real-world communication. Additionally, the findings corroborated that learners possess a mix of language mindsets (Lou et al., 2022) as mindsets proved malleable in the pre-intervention and post-intervention phases. The study also emphasised the complementary nature of motivation and mindset (Lou et al., 2017), as the effect size derived from the impact of interventions proved the same.

By aligning with the perspective that authenticity is generated by how learners interact with the materials and the motivation they receive from them (Tomlinson, 2013), the present study establishes authentic materials as aspects that can be positively exploited to enhance learners' motivation and mindset. The use and impact of authentic materials are particularly relevant in ESL and EFL contexts where the opportunities for L2 use are limited to classrooms. The findings of this study also strengthen previous studies conducted in non-Western regions such as Iran (Namaziandost et al., 2021), Taiwan (Kung, 2017) and Thailand (Treve, 2023), where authentic materials proved to enhance learners' motivation and attitudes to language learning. Unlike these studies, which adapted authentic materials by providing weekly assignments and reading passages, this study adapted different sections of newspapers and designed speaking activities for learners, which also indicates the importance of material adaptation in classrooms.

The main objective of this study was to report the impact that authentic materials had on the

motivation levels and language mindset of learners. Specifically, speaking skills were chosen as this particular skill is reportedly a spontaneous skill with a proclivity to induce elements of anxiety and frustration among learners (Piniel & Albert, 2018). While the enhancement of learners' speaking skills was not an objective of this study, it can be deciphered that the positive impact on their motivation and growth mindset is indicative of their ability to improve further.

## 6. Conclusion and Limitations

The study explored the impact of authentic materials on tertiary-level learners' L2 motivation and language mindset for their speaking skills. Using newspapers, it examined these two variables as both are interconnected and can determine learners' learning processes. Even though L2 motivation is a well-explored aspect in ESL classrooms (Chen & Hwang, 2020; Kumar, 2021), the impact of authentic materials on motivation concerning speaking skills is underexamined. Correspondingly, language mindset was taken as another variable, as both can influence positive emotions such as willingness to communicate, enjoyment, and grit. As shown through the study, motivation and language mindset are corollaries that can bring substantial changes among language learners. Nonetheless, it is necessary to adopt appropriate measures that enhance their latent emotions, which will eventually contribute to skills development.

Despite the long-standing history of authentic materials, their use is limited as textbooks remain the "time-saver for busy teachers and a guide for inexperienced teachers" (Mishan & Timmis, 2015, p. 45). While authentic materials have a history that dates back to the 1970s when communicative language teaching gained impetus (Daskalovska & Dimova, 2012), their utility in helping learners involve in communication similar to real-world scenarios is often overlooked as textbooks remain popular (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018) with decontextualised examples that revolve around a predetermined syllabus (Huang, 2019). However, solely following prescribed textbooks offers less

autonomy as learners tend to limit themselves within the framework of the textbook (Pasqualato, 2020). Besides, authentic materials are successful when teachers and learners can adapt them through activities and tasks that align with learners' language needs. The complexity involved in their implementation should not deter teachers as authentic materials provide the feeling of learning and using an actual language (Badri & Salehi, 2017).

While it is suggested that authentic materials promote cultural bias (Martinez, 2002), they can also be used to help learners recognise what constitutes cultural bias and sharpen their awareness of cultural differences and intercultural competence (Khabir et al., 2022). As ELT textbooks are often critiqued for engendering stereotypes around gender, migrants, Indigenous people, and marginalised groups (Grant & Wong, 2018), an efficient adaptation of authentic materials such as newspapers can induce critical thinking and generate multiple perspectives. Furthermore, using authentic materials at the school level is a desirable practice as materials such as comic books, pictures, and songs can boost learners' motivation (Nirmala, 2013). Language skills in general require practice, for which exposure to authentic texts and related opportunities are provided in classrooms. By diverting from the sole focus on test preparations and examinations, authentic materials at advanced levels can enhance learners' affective factors such as motivation, mindset, and confidence (Kung, 2017).

The current study was a data-driven investigation conducted within a classroom of tertiary-level learners. In line with self-determination theory, it is recognised that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are psychological needs of learners to be nurtured in language classrooms (Printer, 2023), which authentic materials can adeptly fulfil. As shown through the study, learners participated in activities, expressed their ideas, gained support from teachers, collaborated with peers, and provided feedback on the use of authentic materials in the classroom. Authentic materials can also let learners acquire language skills by showing them the utilisation of language concerning real-world

situations, thus helping them cultivate meaning in life and add value to what they do in L2 classrooms.

This study did not score learners' speaking performances before and after the interventions, as the focus was on their motivation and mindset. Though these activities have replicative features across contexts, modifications might be necessary as per the interests of learners and the difficulty levels they perceive. By directly relating activities and materials to their realities, language learning is actualised as carrying personal value for them. Equipping learners with the ability to identify their strengths (Snyder & Lopez, 2001) and preparing them to combat negative emotions can be achieved through several strategies, among which the use of authentic materials is valuable. Since the results implied a positive impact of newspapers and an increasing trend for L2 motivation and language mindset among a classroom of learners, it can be inferred that these newspapers and authentic materials are valid tools to be used in language classrooms.

Additionally, there is a need to report the known limitations of this study. Since the research design was pre-experimental and conducted in an intact classroom of 33 learners, it lacks a control group to fully cement the validity of intervention effects that might be prone to maturation and test effects. Additionally, the small sample size cautions against generalisations as it might not capture the diversity and variations within the learner population. The limited number of participants also compromises external validity as the observed impact cannot be extrapolated to a larger population. The learners were also not tested for their speaking skills, as the sole focus was on their motivation and language mindset. However, future studies can address these limitations by increasing the sample size and implementing authentic materials in a classroom where reserving control and treatment groups proves feasible.

The fact that authentic materials aid learners' motivation and incite interest among them is well-established in scholarship (Peacock, 1997; Shirai, 2013). However, empirical examinations that offer validity to its claim are few. This study intends to contribute to the existing research on authentic

materials, motivation, and language mindset regarding speaking skills, which is often considered a skill that receives less attention in L2 classrooms (Gan, 2013). Towards this end, this paper showcases authentic materials as potential measures that can instigate positive emotions and provide opportunities for speaking and communicative activities.

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