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LEARNERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF AUTHENTIC MEDIA-BASED STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING ENGLISH MONOLOGIC SPEAKING SKILLS: EVIDENCE FROM UZBEK ACADEMIC LYCEUMS

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Abstract Monologic speaking is one of the most demanding productive skills for learners of English as a foreign language (EFL), yet it remains underdeveloped in many Uzbek academic lyceums, where instruction is often shaped by examination-oriented routines and limited exposure to naturally occurring language. This study examined how learners in two academic lyceums in the Tashkent region perceived the use of authentic media—podcasts, video clips, TED-Ed talks, and songs—as a strategy for developing monologic speaking skills such as retelling, summarizing, and short oral presentations. Using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, data were collected from 68 first- and second-year lyceum learners (CEFR B1–B2) through a 23-item Likert-scale questionnaire administered after an eight-week instructional intervention, and from semi-structured interviews with eight volunteer participants. Descriptive statistics showed that learners rated authentic media positively for motivation and engagement (M = 4.31, SD = 0.52) and moderately for speaking confidence (M = 3.86, SD = 0.61), while perceived difficulty remained comparatively high (M = 3.42, SD = 0.74), largely attributable to fast native-speaker speech rate and unfamiliar idiomatic language. Thematic analysis of the interview data identified five recurring themes: increased motivation, growing confidence through repeated modeling, vocabulary and pronunciation gains, comprehension-related challenges, and a desire for greater teacher scaffolding. The findings suggest that authentic media can meaningfully support monologic speaking development when accompanied by graded difficulty, pre-listening preparation, and structured follow-up tasks. Implications for lyceum curriculum design and teacher training in Uzbekistan are discussed.

Keywords: authentic materials, monologic speaking, learners’ perceptions, academic lyceum, Uzbekistan, EFL

Introduction Since gaining independence, Uzbekistan has invested heavily in reforming foreign language education, most visibly through the 2012 State Program for Further Development of the Foreign Languages Learning System and subsequent decrees that elevated English to a compulsory subject from primary school through higher education. Academic lyceums—specialized upper-secondary institutions attached to universities and colleges—occupy a pivotal position in this reform: their graduates are expected to enter higher education, and increasingly international programs, with a working command of spoken English. Yet teachers and researchers alike continue to report that Uzbek lyceum learners struggle most with productive oral skills, and specifically with monologic speech: the sustained, largely uninterrupted stretch of talk required for narrating an experience, summarizing a text, or presenting an opinion (Valiev, 2025; Zokirova, 2025). Unlike dialogic exchanges, which are supported by a conversational partner’s turns and negotiation of meaning, a monologue places the entire cognitive burden of planning, organizing, and delivering an extended utterance on a single speaker (Bygate, 1987; Thornbury, 2005). For learners whose classroom exposure is dominated by textbook dialogues and grammar-translation routines, this burden is often unmanageable.

One pedagogical response that has attracted growing international attention is the use of authentic materials—texts and media produced for genuine communicative purposes rather than for language instruction—as a bridge between classroom language and the language learners will actually encounter and need to produce (Gilmore, 2007). Authentic podcasts, video blogs, television interviews, TED-style talks, and songs expose learners to natural pacing, intonation, discourse markers, and register in ways that scripted textbook material rarely can (Berardo, 2006). Because such media typically feature a single speaker delivering an extended, coherent stretch of discourse, they also provide a naturally occurring model for the very monologic structures learners are asked to produce: a podcast host summarizing a news story, a vlogger narrating a trip, or a TED speaker building an argument. Recent studies outside Uzbekistan report that structured use of podcasts and videos, particularly when paired with tasks that require learners to retell, summarize, or respond to what they have heard, can improve both fluency and learners’ willingness to speak (Ismail et al., 2026).

Within Uzbekistan specifically, a small but growing body of research has begun to document the conditions under which such strategies might succeed or fail. Jalolova and Abdullaev (2025) argue that aligning lyceum instruction with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) requires a shift toward communicative, task-based teaching supported by authentic materials and technology, but note that many teachers lack the training or resources to implement this shift consistently. Valiev (2025) identifies motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety as the psychological variables most strongly associated with lyceum learners’ spoken English development, while Zokirova (2025) documents that Uzbek learners’ reluctance to speak is frequently rooted in fear of making mistakes and a lack of exposure to naturalistic spoken input rather than in a simple deficit of grammatical knowledge. Rahmanova and Yangın Ekşi (2023) similarly find that Uzbek students value opportunities for authentic, real-world English use but perceive limited opportunities to obtain it within formal instruction. Taken together, these studies suggest that authentic media may address several

interlocking problems at once—motivation, anxiety, and lack of exposure—but none of them examines learners' own perceptions of media-based strategies specifically as a tool for monologic speaking development in the academic lyceum context.

This study addresses that gap. It reports on learners' perceptions, gathered through a mixed-methods design, of an eight-week instructional intervention that integrated authentic podcasts, videos, and songs into monologic speaking practice in two academic lyceums in the Tashkent region. Three research questions guided the study:

RQ1. How do academic lyceum learners perceive the use of authentic media-based strategies for developing monologic speaking skills?

RQ2. Which types of authentic media do learners perceive as most supportive of confidence and fluency in monologic speech?

RQ3. What challenges do learners report when using authentic media to practice monologic speaking?

Methods

Research Design

The study adopted an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), in which quantitative questionnaire data were collected first to establish general patterns in learners' perceptions, followed by qualitative semi-structured interviews intended to explain and enrich those patterns. This design was chosen because learners' perceptions of a relatively novel instructional strategy are unlikely to be captured fully by numerical ratings alone; open-ended interview data allow learners to describe, in their own words, why particular media types felt helpful or difficult (Dörnyei, 2007).

Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in two academic lyceums affiliated with public universities in the Tashkent region. Participants were 68 first- and second-year lyceum learners (38 female, 30 male; age range 16–18) whose English proficiency, as assessed by their institutions' placement tests, corresponded to CEFR levels B1 to B2. Learners were recruited through convenience sampling within intact classes whose teachers had agreed to incorporate the intervention into their regular speaking lessons. Participation in the questionnaire and interviews was voluntary and anonymous; learners and their guardians were informed of the study's purpose, and consent was obtained in accordance with the participating institutions' research ethics procedures.

Instructional Intervention

Over eight weeks, participating classes replaced part of their regular speaking practice with tasks built around authentic media: short segments from BBC Learning English and VOA Learning English podcasts, unscripted YouTube vlogs, TED-Ed talks, and English-language songs. The intervention followed principles of task-based, communicative language teaching (Nunan, 1991), in which oral production is organized around meaningful content rather than discrete grammar points. Each weekly cycle followed the same broad structure: a pre-listening stage in which key vocabulary and background knowledge were introduced; a viewing or listening stage, often repeated; and a production stage in which learners were asked to

complete a monologic speaking task modeled on the input—retelling a story, summarizing an opinion, or delivering a short two- to three-minute presentation on a related topic.

Instruments

Two instruments were used. First, a 23-item questionnaire, adapted from existing scales on authentic materials and learner motivation and piloted with 15 learners not included in the main sample (Cronbach’s alpha = .84), measured four constructs on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree): perceived usefulness for speaking development, motivation and engagement, speaking confidence, and perceived difficulty. Second, a semi-structured interview protocol comprising eight guiding questions explored learners’ experiences with specific media types, perceived changes in their own speaking, and the difficulties they encountered. Eight learners who volunteered after the questionnaire stage were interviewed individually in Uzbek or English, according to their preference; interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Data Analysis

Questionnaire responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) for each construct. Interview transcripts were analyzed thematically following the six-phase procedure described by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarization, initial coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and reporting. Two researchers coded the transcripts independently before reconciling codes into a shared set of themes, which are reported alongside illustrative excerpts in the Results section.

Results

Quantitative Findings

Table 1 summarizes learners’ mean ratings across the four questionnaire constructs.

Table 1

Learners’ Perceptions of Authentic Media-Based Strategies (N = 68)

Construct	M	SD
Motivation and engagement	4.31	0.52
Perceived usefulness for speaking development	4.02	0.58
Speaking confidence	3.86	0.61
Perceived difficulty	3.42	0.74

Note. Ratings were made on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Learners rated motivation and engagement highest among the four constructs, indicating that authentic media were experienced as noticeably more interesting than textbook-based speaking activities. Perceived usefulness for speaking development was also rated favorably, suggesting that learners saw a clear connection between the media-based tasks and their own oral skill growth. Ratings for speaking confidence, while still positive, were more moderate, and perceived difficulty—reflecting learners’ agreement with statements such as “authentic audio is hard for me to follow”—remained comparatively high, pointing to a persistent tension between the motivational benefits of authentic input and its linguistic demands.

When ratings were disaggregated by media type, video-based materials (vlogs and TED-Ed talks) were rated as more supportive of speaking confidence than audio-only podcasts, a pattern learners attributed in interviews to the availability of visual and gestural cues that aided comprehension. Songs were rated highest for motivation but lowest for perceived usefulness, largely because learners found it difficult to extract material directly transferable to monologic speaking tasks.

Qualitative Findings

Thematic analysis of the interview data produced five recurring themes.

Increased motivation and authenticity of exposure. Nearly all interviewed learners described authentic media as “more real” or “more alive” than textbook dialogues. One learner explained, “In the book, people always speak clearly and slowly, like actors. In the video, the girl speaks fast, she laughs, she makes mistakes—it feels like real English.”

Growing confidence through repeated modeling. Several learners reported that repeated viewing or listening, followed by attempts to imitate the speaker’s structure and rhythm, gradually reduced their hesitation when producing their own monologues. One participant noted, “The first time, I could not speak for even one minute. After watching the same video three times, I could talk for two minutes without stopping.”

Vocabulary and pronunciation gains. Learners frequently linked authentic media exposure to noticeable gains in vocabulary and pronunciation, particularly of colloquial expressions absent from their textbooks.

Comprehension-related challenges. The most consistently reported difficulty concerned speech rate, unfamiliar accents, and idiomatic or culturally specific references. Several learners described feeling “lost” during their first exposure to a new podcast or video, especially when no transcript was available.

Desire for greater teacher scaffolding. Learners repeatedly requested more structured support: pre-teaching of key vocabulary before exposure, availability of subtitles or transcripts, and follow-up discussion sessions to clarify content before the speaking task itself.

Discussion

The findings offer a nuanced answer to the study’s three research questions. In response to RQ1, learners perceived authentic media-based strategies favorably overall, particularly with respect to motivation and perceived usefulness, a pattern consistent with Gilmore’s (2007) argument that authenticity itself carries motivational value independent of any specific linguistic feature of the input. The comparatively high ratings of perceived difficulty, however, echo Berardo’s (2006) caution that authentic materials, precisely because they are not designed for learners, risk overwhelming lower-proficiency students unless carefully mediated by scaffolding and task design. In this study, that tension appears to have been managed adequately rather than eliminated: learners valued the exposure even as they struggled with it, suggesting that difficulty was experienced as a productive challenge rather than a barrier, provided pre-listening support was in place.

With regard to RQ2, the advantage of video over audio-only podcasts for building speaking confidence aligns with multimodal accounts of listening comprehension, in which visual and paralinguistic cues reduce the processing burden and allow learners to attend more

fully to linguistic content that they can subsequently reproduce. This finding also resonates with Ismail et al.’s (2026) report that podcast-video materials, when integrated with explicit skill instruction, outperformed audio-only equivalents in developing EFL learners’ speaking outcomes. The comparatively weaker showing of songs for perceived usefulness, despite their high motivational appeal, suggests that not all authentic genres are equally suited to monologic speaking practice: the fragmented, often figurative language of song lyrics may need to be treated as a source of motivation and vocabulary rather than as a direct model for extended, organized speech, which is more readily supplied by narrative or argumentative genres such as vlogs and TED-style talks (Bygate, 1987; Richards, 2008; Thornbury, 2005).

The challenges identified in response to RQ3—fast speech rate, unfamiliar accents, and idiomatic density—mirror the anxiety-related barriers to spoken English documented among Uzbek learners more broadly (Zokirova, 2025) and the psychological factors, including confidence and motivation, that Valiev (2025) identifies as central to lyceum learners’ oral development. Read together, these findings suggest that authentic media may function not only as linguistic input but as a tool for gradually desensitizing learners to the unpredictability of real spoken English, provided repeated exposure is built into the instructional cycle, as it was in the present intervention. The learners’ explicit request for greater scaffolding—pre-teaching, transcripts, and follow-up discussion—directly supports Jalolova and Abdullaev’s (2025) recommendation that Uzbek lyceums adopt communicative, technology-integrated methods only alongside adequate teacher preparation; without such scaffolding, the promise of authentic media risks being undermined by the very difficulty that makes it authentic in the first place.

These findings should be interpreted alongside the study’s limitations, discussed below, but they nonetheless point to a practical middle path for Uzbek academic lyceums: rather than treating authenticity and accessibility as opposing goals, teachers can grade the difficulty of the media selected, provide structured pre- and while-listening support, and sequence tasks so that learners move gradually from short, heavily scaffolded retellings toward longer, more independent monologues.

Conclusion

This study examined how learners in two Uzbek academic lyceums perceived an eight-week intervention that integrated authentic podcasts, videos, and songs into monologic speaking practice. Learners rated the strategy favorably for motivation and perceived usefulness, more moderately for speaking confidence, and reported persistent difficulty related to the pace and unpredictability of authentic spoken input. Qualitative interviews revealed that learners valued the authenticity and repeated modeling that media-based tasks provided, while also calling for stronger teacher scaffolding in the form of pre-teaching, transcripts, and follow-up discussion.

These findings carry practical implications for lyceum teachers and curriculum designers in Uzbekistan. First, authentic media—particularly video-based genres such as vlogs and TED-Ed talks—appear well suited to supporting monologic speaking development, but only when difficulty is graded and scaffolding is deliberately built into each instructional cycle. Second, teacher training programs, as recommended by Jalolova and Abdullaev (2025),

should prepare teachers not merely to select authentic materials but to mediate them pedagogically. Third, curriculum planners might consider sequencing media types across the academic year, beginning with more accessible video genres before introducing audio-only podcasts as learners' confidence grows.

The study is limited by its relatively small, convenience-based sample drawn from two institutions in a single region, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to other lyceums or regions of Uzbekistan. The absence of a control group and the reliance on self-reported perceptions, rather than independently measured gains in speaking performance, mean that claims about the intervention's effectiveness must remain tentative. Future research should adopt quasi-experimental designs with pre- and post-intervention speaking assessments scored against standardized rubrics, extend data collection across multiple regions and institution types, and examine whether the benefits observed here persist over a longer instructional period. Despite these limitations, the present findings offer encouraging evidence that authentic media-based strategies, thoughtfully scaffolded, can play a meaningful role in helping Uzbek academic lyceum learners develop the confidence and fluency required for extended spoken English.

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