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## Authenticity in the Language Classroom and its Effect on ELF Learners' Language Proficiency

**Dr. Amal Musa Karam Allah Mohammed**

Assistant Professor - Faculty of Arts – English Department  
University of Hail - Saudi Arabia

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**ABSTRACT:** *Authentic materials is one of the best materials that can be used in teaching and learning process in classroom in order to enhance the learners' language skills and proficiency. The aim of this study is to identify the use of authentic materials in the language classroom and its effects on ELF learners' language skills and proficiency. Two types of questionnaires were designed for the students and the teachers in the English language department as a research tools to collect data, besides classroom observation was implemented. This study was conducted during the first semester of the academic year (2022- 2023). The total sample of this study was (50) respondents, (10) English language lecturers and (40) female students from the Faculty of Arts at the University of Hail – Shimli Branch. An analytical descriptive approach was used. The findings of the study indicate that authentic materials are more appropriate for enhancing English language proficiency, also they can engage and motivate students and associating them to real world of using language.*

**KEYWORDS:** Authentic materials, language proficiency, ELF Learners, communicative competence. learning environment.

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### INTRODUCTION

One of the major ideas of using authentic materials in the classroom is exposing the learner to as much real language as possible. Authentic materials do have a very important place within it, even if the classroom is not a real-life situation. It has been argued that “by taking a text out of its original context, it loses its authenticity”.

The concept of using authentic texts in language teaching and learning is supported among professionals, many experts and references in the field of language Teaching. Authentic material provides the learners with abundant significant advantages and promotes them with high motivation and interest in language learning and lead to enhancing linguistic competences.

The utilizing of authentic materials in an EFL classroom is involved by many teachers in the field of English language teaching in recent years in different ways such as, magazines, articles, real advertisements, cooking recipes, newspaper, reports, etc. Many teachers worldwide accepts

that authentic materials are worthwhile and beneficial to the language learning environment and process in an EFL classroom.

Moreover, authentic classroom atmosphere can engage and motivate students to take control over their own learning, consequently, encouraging a path toward learner autonomy. Nunan (1999) stated that learners should read and listen to authentic topics as much as possible in order to avoid difficulty in their learning task. Moreover, to convert the teaching situation into reality in classrooms, authentic materials can give real exposure, provide motivation, creative teaching, cultural awareness, (Peacock 1997).

### **Purpose of the Study:**

The major purpose of this study is to detect the perceptions of English language students and teachers towards using authentic materials in their classes. In addition to elicit its importance on improving students' language use and proficiency.

### **Objectives of the study :**

The objective of this study was to investigate:

- 1- The teachers' perceptions towards using authentic materials in their EFL classrooms.
- 2- The students' perceptions toward using authentic materials in their EFL classes.
- 3- If the teachers prefer to utilize authentic materials in their English classes.
- 4- If authentic materials have any significance on promoting the students' language proficiency.

### **Significance of the study**

This study can be supportive for English language lecturers, teachers and EFL learners, and it may contribute to the enhancement of the English language teaching and learning by using many types of authentic materials in their classroom to engage students, and raise their level of motivation, interest, and thus promote language use and proficiency.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW & PREVIOUS STUDIES**

### **What is authentic materials in language classroom?**

The term authentic materials have been defined in several methods in the literature. According to Nunan (1989, as cited in Adams, 1995) states that authentic materials are not always created for the purpose of language teaching, another definition by Little et al. (1988, as cited in Guariento & Morley, 2001) points out that authentic materials are used for some social purposes in the language context where they are produced. On the other hand, Bacon and Finnemann (1990) also define authentic materials as follows: "Authentic materials are those materials which are made by native speakers for non-pedagogical purposes".

Simply, Authentic materials are written or spoken texts used with learners without changing the level of language. The sources of authentic materials which come from a genuine source, can be utilized in the classroom are infinite, but the most popular are TV programs, radios, newspapers, magazines, , movies, a news, songs, books, menus, films, the Internet, podcast, video ...etc.

### **Types of Authentic materials**

There are many types of authentic materials, here are examples of them:

**Magazines:** They are massively used as rich source of authentic texts in the English language classes as they are very interesting and inspire a wide variety of activities. Magazines help the learners in improving the language skills, grammar and vocabulary. They consist of considerable amount of information and of a wide range of text types.

**Newspapers:** One of the most important and best sources of authentic texts which are more helpful in teaching and learning in the classrooms is the newspapers. The teachers can use the useful news reports as authentic texts in teaching the students in English classes. It enables the English language students to grasp and understand the language usage in a various way. Newspapers are also informative they provide news on a variety of topics including education columns, , cultural activities columns, sports columns, geographical and historical columns, etc. They also present the daily language with all the possible idiomatic expressions of the local culture. Newspapers are used to improve the English language students', writing skills, grammatical skills, vocabulary skills, reading comprehension and critical thinking.

**Media:** It is utilized as an accessive tool for language teachers to improve the presentation of the materials in the classrooms. Media plays a vital role in engaging the learners' learning process of the language. The teachers of English have to choose media that are used in teaching and learning process appropriate for the students' interests and needs and. Murcia (2001: 461) emphasizes, "Media tools are physical things used by the teacher to motivate the students by bringing a slice of real life into the classroom and by presenting language in its more complete communication complex".

### **Brochures:**

**Brochures:** In fact, brochures are cost effective and they are largely used in teaching and learning English. Brochures come in several shapes and sizes. The teachers can support the learners to collect many brochures of various companies and institutions such as travel brochures. The teachers should give a chance to the learners to select a particular destination and ask them to write about it why they want to travel to that particular place. Using the travel brochure, the teachers can booster the language skills of the learners and their language proficiency.

**Menus:** Menus are available and found in all the restaurants and a lot of them have online menus. As food plays an essential role in the lives of the people, especially in the lives of the students, the English language classes teachers can present the menus as their authentic teaching materials. The teachers can encourage the learners to use the menus of the restaurants to have dialogues with their partners. Also, the students can order the food in the restaurants with more confidence. Teacher ask learners to use a dictionary with them to look up the terms related to food. Since the learners of English improve their speaking as well as analytical and reasoning skills using menus in the classrooms, the teachers of English should attempt to introduce identical activities to promote the learners' all the four language skills in real-time situation.

**Weather Reports:** Due to its audio-visual impacts, TV plays a crucial role in using it as authentic materials. The songs, games, attractive ads, comics, movies, pictures, sports programs, weather reports and so on are have enormous use to teach the learners in the language classes. Generally, the teachers of English can make use of authentic materials to make the learning motivating and interesting in the classrooms with a dash of creativity. Therefore, the teachers can integrate authentic materials into their EFL classrooms to create fun among the students by using the suitable authentic material for the learners' needs. Moreover, the teachers should adopt authentic materials that highly impact their students in learning the English language and thus, enhancing the language proficiency overall.

#### **Advantages of authentic materials:**

Authentic materials have a positive influence on learner motivation fore instance:

- 1- Authentic materials provide authentic cultural information.
- 2- Also they provide exposure to actual language.
- 3- They are easily available everywhere.
- 4- They Bring students into direct contact with a reality level of English language . .
- 5- Authentic materials from a certain source, such as: newspapers, magazines, TV programs, movies, songs, literature books and the Internet.
- 6- Authentic materials provide us with a source of up-to-date texts which can be relevant to English language learners' needs.
- 7- They are beneficial to minimize the level of fear among the learners from using the language.
- 8- They are so useful to improve social language skills.
- 9- They promote creativity among the students and the teachers.
- 10- They provide the learners with higher level of motivation.
- 11- They r build a real connection between the outside world and the English classroom.
- 12- They encourage the students to concentrate more on the language .

#### **Disadvantages of authentic materials:**

According to Richards (2001, p. 253) states that beside, of these advantage, authentic materials often include difficult language, they contain more unfamiliar language, unrequired vocabulary terms and complicated language structures, which increase burdens for the teachers in lower level classes. Martinez (2002) says that authentic materials may be too culturally based and too many structures are mixed, causing lower levels have a hard time interpreting the texts.

#### **The role of the teacher in the authentic classroom language:**

A teacher has a great role when deciding to use authentic materials in his/ her classroom, here are some norms to follow :

- 1- As authentic materials should be selected according to the students' needs and interests.
- 2- The teacher should consider the suitability of content, exploitability, and readability when selecting authentic materials.
- 3- The authentic materials should be culturally relevant to the students' level.

- 4- The method the authentic materials is used to improve the students' proficiency.
- 5- The teacher can search for sites that focus on a specific topic.

### **Previous studies:**

The use of authentic materials in language teaching and learning, engage and grabbing the attention of many researchers.

Lestari Setyowati, and Sony Sukmawan. (2019) conducted a study intended to describe :1- the theoretical relationship between Content-Based Instruction and authentic materials that can be used by language teachers to teach writing in the classroom, 2- the previous studies of authentic materials used for teaching writing, 3- the type of authentic materials which can be used for teaching writing, and 4) the advantages and disadvantages of using authentic materials for teaching writing. The method used was qualitative research focused on content analysis. The instrument used was mainly human instrument and documentation. The result of the extensive review of literature shows that 1) one of the main feature of content-based instruction is the use of authentic materials for teaching; 2) most studies in the area of authentic materials for teaching writing shows the effectiveness of authentic materials for teaching procedure texts, descriptive texts and essay writing; 3) the type of authentic materials used for teaching writing is categorized based on how it is transmitted, namely audio, visual, and printed material materials; 4) aside from having its advantages, authentic materials also give challenges for the teacher to use it for classroom teaching, among others are practicality, comprehensibility and appropriateness.

Arifa (2018) also conducted an experimental a study in order to find out the effect of authentic materials on the students' ability in writing procedure text in senior high school level. Her subjects were 10th year students of an Islamic State high school in Palangkaraya, Indonesia by taking two classes in which each consisted 30 students. The experimental group was taught by using authentic materials in procedure text, while the control group was taught with nonauthentic materials. The result of the study shows that the experimental group shows better performance in making procedure texts as compared to the control group. It was concluded that the use of authentic material is effective to improve the students' ability in making procedure text.

Styati (2016), piloted another research aimed at investigating the effect of authentic materials on students' ability for paragraph writing. The subjects of her research were the second semester students of English department in a College of Teacher Training and Education in Madiun, Indonesia. In her study, she used You Tube videos and picture series as the authentic materials. Through the use of quasi experimental design, she found out that pictures was more effective to improve the students' ability in writing than You Tube videos.

Zoghi, Moradiyan, and Kazemi, (2014) undertook this survey, aimed at investigated how authentic materials facilitated vocabulary development. (50) IELTS student were randomly selected. IELTS classes were observed several times and then a self-reported questionnaire was distributed to all students of chosen classes. The findings indicated that majority of the students preferred using authentic materials for vocabulary acquisition because by using authentic material students dealt

with outside, real world, they became interested when dealt with real language, became familiar with the culture of target language, and authentic materials increased their motivation for learning second language.

Wu, et al., (2011), conducted this paper to investigate the effect of aural authentic materials on second or foreign language learners' motivation. The research made an attempt to find out how aural authentic materials help to enhance learner motivation in a process - oriented conceptualization. In the main study, two advanced English classes which used aural authentic materials participated. The results of the questionnaires and post- questionnaire interviews indicated the positive effect of aural authentic materials on initiating and sustaining learner motivation. The findings also suggested the benefit of aural authentic materials to learning.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In this section of the study, the research procedure is described in terms of participants, data gathering instruments, method of analysis and discussion and the findings.

### **Participants:**

The participants in the study consists of (40) university female students who study English language as their major specialization. They were randomly chosen from the College of Arts, Hail University – Shamli Branch in Saudi Arabia. Their ages range are between (19 to 22) years old. All of the respondents speak Arabic language as their first language. (10) English language faculty members were selected from the same college to examine the students' language proficiency via using authentic materials.

### **Instruments:**

In this study, the researchers used two types of instruments, namely classroom observations, two questionnaires one was designed for the lecturers, the other one was for the learners

**Questionnaires:** To achieve the objectives of this study, two questionnaires consist of fifteen items in the form of yes, / no, questions were used. The two questionnaires, one was for students including (5) items, the other one was for the faculty member in the English department, including (10) items. Both questionnaires investigated the use of authentic materials to enhance English language skills proficiency.

### **Classroom Observations:**

The researchers observed all activities that run in the classroom and observed the process of teaching English language using authentic material. On the other hand, to elicit what is happening inside the classroom, the researchers have selected one classroom randomly and observed it during their classes. The classroom observation data were captured via different types of notes.

### Validity & Reliability

It can be argued that the instruments are valid since it have been developed and used by specialists in this field. However, five EFL specialists and experts were kindly requested to check if the two data collection tools were appropriate and relevant to the domains and context and they classify them as obvious and applicable. Also, they made little alterations on the instruments, which were embedded.

### Data Collection and Analysis:

The questionnaires were distributed directly by the researcher to the students and faculty members to elicit students' perceptions of towards learning English language before and after using authentic materials . The findings of the pre and post-questionnaires were compared to find if there was a significant change in the attitudes of the students towards learning English language after the implementing of authentic materials in their English classes . The questionnaire comprises of ten items in the form of yes, / no, questions. After that, the questionnaires were analyzed in terms of percentage and frequency by using manually Also, the classroom observation was conducted with the participants.. However, classroom observation data were analyzed manually in the form of thematic and interpretative analyses.

### Students' Questionnaire Quantitative Analysis:

**Table (1): Students' Questionnaire Items Replies:**

No:	Question	Yes		NO	
		No:	%	No:	%
Q:1	Are you satisfied with your level in English?	12	30 %	28	70 %
Q:2	Do you face any difficulties in learning English?	32	80 %	8	20 %
Q:3	Have you ever learned the English language using any type of authentic materials?	6	15 %	34	85 %
Q:4	Do your teacher use any of authentic texts in teaching English classes?	8	20%	32	80 %
Q:5	Do you think are they helpful in developing English language skills and enhance proficiency?	30	75 %	10	30 %

In Question (1) about 70% of the respondents admitted that they were not satisfied with their level of English and they required more development. In Question (2) almost 80 % encountered difficulties in learning English. The responses to Question (3&4) revealed that (85% -80%) of the participants did not use any type of authentic texts / materials to learn English. This indicates many students still rely on traditional methods to learn English language. In question (5) 80% answered they could improve their language skills and proficiency by using authentic texts/materials.

### Summary:

A few Students stated that they work on their own using the authentic materials to learn English, using you tubes , some of them said they listened to songs, watched some documentary videos ,

another respondents use the internet to prepare some research and presentations that helped them in their English tasks and assignments. some students mentioned that they read short stories .

### Faculty's Questionnaire Quantitative Analysis:

**Table (2): Faculty's Questionnaire Items Replies:**

No:	Question	YES		NO	
		No:	%	No	%
Q:1	Have you ever used any videos in your English classes.	5	50%	5	50 %
Q:2	Have you ever advised your students to attend any TV/ radio programme such as BBC, VOA,.. etc?	3	30%	7	70%
Q:3	Have you ever used newspapers to teach your lesson?	4	40%	6	60%
Q:4	Have you ever used magazines in your ELT classroom?	4	40%	6	60%
Q:5	Have you ever used films in your E lesson to engage your student?	6	60%	4	40%
Q:6	Have you ever used menus to teach any language skills?	1	10 %	9	90%
Q:7	Do you think using authentic materials have any effects on the students' language skills?	8	80%	2	20%
Q:8	Do you prefer to utilize authentic materials in their English classes.	7	70%	3	30%
Q:9	Do you incorporate authentic materials in your teaching strategy later?	8	80%	2	20%
Q:10	Do you have any suggestions or additions?	2	20%	8	80%

In responding to questions (1) , almost 50% faculty use videos in their English classes. This indicated that approximately half of English teachers at the department do not use authentic materials in their classrooms. Questions (2, 3, 4, and 6) were dealt with using TV channels/ radio programmes, newspapers, magazines, menus in learning English classes, the results indicated negative answers ranging between (60% to 90%). This showed that the faculty members did not use these type of authentic materials. In responding to questions (5) 60% of the staff members use films in their English classrooms. This showed they were familiar with using films as an authentic material in their lesson when it is appropriate. Question (7) asked about the teachers' attitudes towards using authentic materials and whether they are effective on improving student learning proficiency. The respondents showed positive reaction and attitudes on using such authentic material in English classes and how they improve students learning skills. In answering (9 and 10) the questions were about the and utilization of authentic texts / material in teaching English language and incorporating them as teaching strategy in their classes. The tenth and the last question gave the chance for the participants if they liked to add or suggestions. To conclude this

section, it can be said that, these results reveal that the most English teachers at higher education institutions may still do not use or lack use of authentic material. However, they emphasized that authentic materials have significant effect on the learners' proficiency.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study attempted to investigate whether the use of authentic materials promote and enhance the attitudes and perceptions of the EFL learners towards classes. A great number of studies discussed the effects of using authentic materials on learners (Rao, Parupalli Srinivas.(2019) , Lestari Setyowati, and Sony Sukmawan. (2019); Arifa (2018), Styati (2016), Zoghi, Moradiyan, and Kazemi, (2014), Wu, et al, (2011) , Herron & Seay, 1991; Peacock, 1997 Morton, 1999; Breen, M.P. (1985,) emphasize that materials can enhance learning and teaching process and raising up their motivation . In addition, if students use authentic materials as much as possible they will obtain the best learning results. Çakıcı (2007, p. 34) says that using different and appropriate supplementary materials, to encourage students interest. "If the atmosphere in a language classroom is authentic and relaxing, it will enhance the learners" attitude.), The results of this study are compatible with the many studies which support the positive effects of using authentic materials on the EFL students and in EFL classrooms.

## CONCLUSION

Since the use of authentic materials have several benefits and they are very helpful to the teachers to develop their teaching strategy, and for the learners to improve their learning skills and style. So the English language teachers and learners should utilize the authentic materials properly to actualize better results. Eventually, the challenge of the use of authentic material is on how the language teachers chose the relevant authentic materials.

Authentic materials can help learners to interact with truer language and content rather than the form. Therefore, adopting authentic materials in the learning process, should be utilized to bridge the gap between the competency and performance of the learners, which is a commonly makes problems among the language learners in Arab countries. In conclusion, it can be said that authentic materials have marked a positive effect on the learners' language skills proficiency.

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