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Investigating EFL College Student Teachers' Attitudes toward Using Authentic Materials During the Practicum

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Abstract

Authentic material is any kind of material taken from the real world and not specifically created for the purpose of language teaching. It can be text, visuals, or audio materials; it can be realia such as tickets, menus, maps, and timetables; or it can be objects such as products, equipment, components, or models

This study aims at investigating EFL College student teachers' attitudes toward using authentic materials during the practicum.

The participants of this study are including (18) student teachers. To achieve the aim of the study , student teachers' questionnaire consists of (43) items are applied as instruments student teachers' positive attitudes towards using authentic material during the practicum. The results of the research proves that the hypotheses of this research is accepted, which means that Iraqi college student teachers have positive attitudes towards using authentic material during the practicum.

1.1The Problem and Its Significance

Authentic material is any kind of material taken from the real world and not specifically created for the purpose of language teaching. It can be text, visuals, or audio materials; it can be realia such as tickets, menus, maps, and timetables; or it can be objects such as products, equipment,

components, or models. Authentic materials are any texts written by native English speakers for native English speakers (Ellis, 1996: 157).

A newspaper article, a rock song, a novel, a radio interview and a traditional fairy story are examples of authentic text. A story written to exemplify the use of reported speech, a dialogue scripted to exemplify ways of inviting and a linguistically simplified version of a novel would not be authentic text (Tomlinson, 2004: vii).

Similarity, authentic text a text which is spoken for language teaching purposes: TV commercials, films, news items, weather forecasts, airport and station announcement, radio talks, interviews, and debates, and written for language teaching purposes: recipes, articles, train timetables, advertisements, brochures, poems, application forms, and instruction for use of equipment(Hedge, 2000:141).

Furthermore ,Authentic task is a task which involves learners in using language in a way that replicates its use in the 'real world' outside the language classroom. Filling in blanks, changing verbs from the simple past to the simple present and completing substitution tables are, therefore, not authentic tasks (Tomlinson, 2004: vii).

The use of truly authentic texts is an important means of teaching students to communicate effectively(Hedge,2008:68).

There are scholars who argue that the use of authentic materials helps bridge the gap between classroom knowledge and students' capacity to participate in real-world events (Wong et al., 1995:20).

In other words, incorporating authentic materials helps students acquire an effective communicative competence in the target language (Guariento & Morley, 2001:56).

Foreign language pedagogy is increasingly focusing on the functional use of language while teachers look for materials that more closely reflect the language students will encounter outside of the classroom. Grammar practice, drills, exercises, and reading and listening texts found in common textbooks are necessary, but students need to be exposed to and have access to the same language native speakers typically use (ibid).

Harmer (2001:200) states that despite many textbooks' use of non-authentic materials to practice specific language points, only authentic materials will 'genuinely' improve listening and reading skills.

Martinez (2002: 68) also points out that some of the authentic materials may be too culturally biased and many structures are too mixed which

cause the lower levels students a hard time to decode the text. Another problem may come out when students learn languages for the purpose of gaining success on an examination. Among these situations, teachers have to take the responsibility to ensure the maximum of learners' eagerness to success. Therefore, if students are presented with authentic text which may not give the rules, patterns, or structures they need to pass an exam, they will be resented and treat them as an obstacle to their success. Moreover, authentic text may become a distraction to learners because it may be so obvious or introduce or emphasize on more language learning possibilities rather than the comprehension and consolidation of examination related features they needed .

Additionally, this research intends to provide at investigating EFL student teachers' attitudes toward using authentic materials during their practicum.

1.2 Aims

This study aims at investigating EFL Iraqi college student teachers' attitudes toward using authentic materials.

1.3 The Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that Iraqi college student teachers have positive attitudes towards using authentic material during the practicum.

1.4 Value

The study sheds light on the student teachers' attitudes toward the use of authentic and their perceptions of the influence of such materials on improving their language proficiency.

1.5 Limits

University fourth year student teachers at the Department of English, College of Baghdad for women.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Performance of Student teachers During Teaching Practice (Practicum)

Cantalini-Williams and Tessaro (2011: 45) state that students' reflection after graduation leads one to question what is the actual impact of the teaching practice experience on students learning . Research has revealed that there are a number of factors that influence/affect student teachers' performance during teaching practice though there is no consensus on their co-relational significance. Among these is the ability to use the authentic materials.

According to Bolarfinw (2013: 12) for any student undergoing a professional course in education, teaching practice is inevitable. Teaching practice is designed to give the student-teachers an opportunity to put into practice, the theories relating to the principles and practice of education, which they have learnt.

The success of the use of competences for developing and assessing student teachers' achievements relies on the sensitive support given to the student in the school by the mentor and in the institution of higher education by the appropriate tutor. The development of a realistic action plan by, with and for students is often the outcome of a review with a mentor.

2.2 Authentic materials

Bacon & Finnemann (1990: 35) "authentic materials are texts produced by native speakers for a non-pedagogical purpose."

Also ,Martinez (2002:1) defined that "Authentic would be material designed for native speakers of English used in the classroom in a way similar to the one it was designed for".

2.3 Authentic Materials and Authenticity

There are a number of terms that are used with regard to authenticity- 'genuine', 'authentic', 'real', 'natural', 'semi-authentic', 'simulated', 'simulated-authentic'. Clearly there are 'gradations' or different degrees of authenticity of 'language data', but of purpose or task, and from the writer's\ speaker's point of view, and from the reader's\listener's. Possibly one solution is to view authenticity from at least four angles- authenticity of: language input, task, event and learner experience (Jordan, 2004: 113).

Also ,authenticity- a term that loosely implies as close an approximation as possible to the world outside the classroom, in the selection both of language material and of the activities and methods used for practice in the classroom(Stern,1991:40).

As a result , There are four types of authenticity within language teaching. Breen (1985: 350) indicates that these types are in continual interrelationship with one another during any language lesson. These types include:

1. Authenticity of the texts which we may use as input data for our learners.
- 2.Authenticity of the learners' own interpretations of such texts.
- 3.Authenticity of tasks conducive to language learning.

4. Authenticity of the actual social situation of the language classroom

2.4 The Use of Authentic Materials in the Classroom

Generally, authentic material means using materials which involve language naturally occurring as communication in native-speaker contexts of use, or rather those selected contexts where standard English is the norm: real newspaper reports, for example, real magazine articles, real advertisements, cooking recipes, horoscopes, etc. Most of the teachers throughout the world agree that authentic texts or materials are beneficial to the language learning process, but what is less agreed is when authentic materials should be introduced and how they should be used in an EFL classroom (Kilickaya:2004:3).

2.4 Why Authentic Materials?

There are several reasons for using authentic materials; First, authentic materials texts (audio or written) will have a number of features that are often lacking in texts and dialogues created for learning English. They will exemplify the particular register to which they belong (academic, legal, or journalistic, etc.) and will often contain specific terminology and jargon and sometimes typical organizational features and sentence patterns (Ellis, 1996: 157).

Second, the material may provide information about real-life situations or events. In this case, it is the content of the materials rather than the language which is useful for the learner.

Finally, Authentic material may provide the core of a very specialized course if the course objective is, for example, to develop skills for reading manuals, instructions, contracts, or financial reports, or to develop letter- writing or report-writing skill.

2.5 Ways of using Authentic Material

There are many ways of using authentic materials other as reading or listening comprehension exercises. For example, they can: provide a realistic context for a role-play, letter, or report; stimulate debate; provide information for a project or presentation; or practice the skills of describing, explaining, instructing, and exchanging information (Ellis, 1996: 158).

Peacock (1997:146) gives the following reasons to use authentic materials:

1. They have a positive effect on learner motivation.
2. They provide authentic cultural information.

- 3.They provide exposure to real language.
- 4.They relate more closely to learners ' needs.
5. They support a more creative approach to teaching.

2.6. Criteria for Selecting and Using Authentic Materials:

Teachers should follow eight criteria when selecting authentic texts:

1. relevance (to syllabus, to learners' needs); 2. intrinsic interest of topic/theme; 3. cultural appropriateness; 4. linguistic demands;
5. cognitive demands; 6. logistical considerations: e.g. length, legibility/audibility; 7. quality (as a model of use or as a representative token of a text-type); 8. exploitability (McGrath, 2002:106).

Also Lee(1995 :ii) states that the important factors in selecting authentic materials are:

- Textual authenticity
- Suitability of content
- Compatibility with course objectives
- Exploitability

Nuttall (1996 : 54) gives three main criteria when choosing texts to be used in the classroom suitability of content, exploitability and readability. Suitability of content can be considered to be the most important of the three, in that the reading material should interest the students as well as be relevant to their needs. The texts should motivate as well as. Exploitability refers to how the text can be used to develop the students' competence as readers. A text that can not be exploited for teaching purposes has no use in the classroom. Just because it is in English does not mean that it can be useful. Readability is used to describe the combination of structural and lexical difficulty of a text, as well as referring to the amount of new vocabulary and any new grammatical forms present.

2.7 Sources of Authentic Materials

The sources of authentic materials that can be used in the classroom (whether spoken or written) are infinite. but the most common are newspapers, magazines, TV programs, movies, Video / DVD, Radio and recordings, songs , rhymes and poems., Pictures, Charts, Diagrams, Advertisements, Realia such as airline tickets, hotel information, Leaflets, posters, instruction manuals, telephone books, menus, maps ,Books, dictionaries, storybooks, comics, Original letters, post cards, timetables, The world outside the classroom: shop, library, museum, art gallery,

Theatre, telephone, talks, cinema and menus are useful for anyone who needs English to travel abroad, particularly if their language level is pre-intermediate or below (Ellis, 1996: 168), etc.

2.7.1 Where to get authentic materials

- the Internet
- library

There is usually an English department in every city or university library. There can be found not only books, but also magazines and music.

- a foreign country

When visiting an English speaking country, one should think about the great opportunity to get authentic materials (ibid).

2.7.2 Difficultness

On British Council web pages, there are described some aspects of using authentic materials. One of them is difficultness of such materials. There is said that they are difficult, but that is the point. Moreover, the trick is to set the task according to the level of the students, not to choose the material according to the students' level.

However, for lower levels are suitable leaflets, menus, timetables, video and audio advertisements, short reports, short news. The tasks should be rather simple and vocabulary should be introduced in advance. Excessive materials for intermediate levels can be longer articles and news or reports, whole TV programmes. The vocabulary should be pre-taught, too. With advanced students, any authentic material can be used. Pre-teaching is not necessary, but it is good to have some explanations and definitions prepared.

As an example, she mentions a German menu, which would not be authentic text if it was used in an English lesson to practice reading prices or learning adjective endings. It would be an authentic piece of text if it was used as a German menu.

In Introduction to Project Work (1992) by Tom Hutchinson, specifics of project working are described. A project is a result of hard work, because the authors have to find information for their project, get pictures or draw some, make a draft containing their ideas, then put everything together and complete the text, the result of which is a presentation.

The teacher can provide the topic, but the authors decide themselves what exactly are they going to write and how will they present it.

As mentioned above, projects are personal. The students write about their lives, their families, their cities or their researches into topics that interest them. Because of such personal approach, both sense of the project and its presentation are important for students. Projects are not simulations. They are real.

Projects are also very operative. It is actually a play. The learners have to collect information, draw pictures, maps or charts, cut out pictures, carry out interviews and surveys and make recordings (Tom, 1992: 10).

3. Procedures

3.1 Population & Sample

The population refers to any set of items ,individuals ,etc. which shares some common and observable characteristics and from which a sample can be taken (Richards et al. ,1992:282) . The population of this research comprises Iraqi college student teachers from college of education/Ibn-Rushd / Baghdad university.

Sampling as defined by Al- Samawi (2000:112) is selecting a number of individuals to represent the population. Berg (2004 :34) states that the logic of using a sample of subjects is to make inferences about some larger population from a smaller one (a sample).

Eighteen student teachers were chosen randomly to represent the main study sample and other twenty students represent the pilot administration.

3.2 The Instrument of the study

In order to fulfill the aim of the present study , which is “Investigating EFL College Student Teachers' Attitudes toward Using Authentic Materials During the Practicum” , a questionnaire was constructed by the researcher .

The type of the questionnaire that used in this research is rating scales questionnaire .A strength of this type of questionnaire is that it elicits responses to specific questions in the form of scaled, quantifiable data which can then be subjected to powerful statistical analysis (Bachman and Palmer,1996:243) .

The items of the questionnaire has been collected on the basis of the related literature, interviews , the open ended questionnaire that have been distributed to students , Previous studies which deal with investigating EFL college student teachers' attitudes toward using authentic materials during the practicum .Each member in the jury has been kindly requested to modify, change or add what her she finds suitable to the checklist .

3.3 Face Validity of the Questionnaire

Ebel (1972:78) claims that face validity is secured if the items appear to be measuring what is intended to be measured . In order to ensure the face validity of the questionnaire, its first version has been exposed to the experts in the fields of linguistics and methodology of teaching EFL.

The experts have been requested to judge whether the components of the questionnaire are suitable or not. In the light of the experts' views some items have been added and others have been omitted.

3.4 Pilot Administration of the Questionnaire

After constructing a questionnaire , a pilot study was required to find out exactly whether the questionnaire is well constructed or not . Twenty students have been chosen randomly from another university for the pilot administration . The pilot sample is excluded from the total sample of the study .

Results of the pilot administration can be a good indicator for making any necessary modifications in the final version of the questionnaire and to determine the effectiveness of the items in the light of the subjects responses.

3.6 Final Administration of the Questionnaire

The Final version of the questionnaire was distributed to the participants at the end of February, 2014 .

The student teachers were asked to give their views on the items according to scale of five dimensions . The student teachers responses have been utilized by the researchers. The period of distributing and receiving the copies of the questionnaire lasted from the end of February to the end March 2014.

4. Result, Conclusions, Recommendations

4.1 The Result

In order to achieve the aim of the study, 'T- Test' for teacher's sample has been used. The results indicate the following as seen in the table below.

The result of T- Test for the student teachers' attitude toward authentic materials

Variable	Number	The arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	Hypothetical mean	T- Value		Level of significance
					Calculated	Tabulated	
Teachers' attitude toward authentic materials	18	160,7222	39,91475	129	3,373	2,111	Significant

The table shows that student teachers have positive attitude towards using authentic materials. So, there is statistically significant differences at $\alpha \leq 0.05$ in the teachers' attitude toward authentic materials.

The calculated T-value is (3.373), which is higher than the T-tabulated (2.111) at (0.05) level of significance and (17) degree of freedom.

College Student Teachers' Attitudes Toward Using Authentic Materials

Components and Items		1	2	3	4	5	weighted average	Weight percentile
The current teaching courses								
1	The reading courses introduce the students to how language is used in the real world.	-	6	3	8	13	3,2212	%64
2	The teaching courses includes	-	2	8	8	12	3,61111	%72

	variety of useful materials.							
3	Using authentic materials motivates students to read other materials outside the classroom.	-	2	3	12	13	3,4344	%69
4	I am satisfied with the current teaching courses.	1	-	4	12	13	3,8332	%77
Using authentic texts will:								
5	Be difficult to select appropriate authentic materials.	12	5	5	6	2	3,2768	%66
6	Introduce students to how language is used in the real world.	-	2	3	10	15	3,8888	%78
7	Be difficult to design the appropriate types of tasks when using authentic texts.	13	1	8	7	2	3,5000	%70
8	Be good to use authentic texts as supplementary materials classes.	-	1	8	8	13	3,6111	%72
9	Increase students' knowledge of vocabulary items which they need in real situations.	-	2	5	13	10	4.22222	%84
10	Increase students' familiarity with the use of grammar rules in their original context.	-	1	5	6	18	4,1666	%83
11	Cause cultural conflicts that	8	3	4	11	12	3,5556	%71

	hinder comprehension.							
12	Improve students' proficiency more than textbook do.	1	-	4	12	13	3,8889	%78
13	Be interesting.	2	3	2	10	13	3,2778	%66
14	Be important to use authentic materials in EFL reading instruction.	-	1	5	10	14	4,1111	%82
15	Help develop students' writing styles more than textbooks do.	-	4	6	9	11	3,1111	%62
16	Help to overcome cultural barriers to language learning.	-	2	5	11	12	3,6111	%72
17	Make students feel frustrated.	12	11	5	2	-	2,7222	%54
18	Motivate students to do more reading outside the classroom.	-	4	6	7	13	3,8889	%78
19	Improve students' reading comprehension ability more than textbooks do.	-	2	4	10	9	3,8333	%77
20	Be time consuming.	2	13	10	2	3	3,2778	%66
21	Enable students to see the value of reading class.	1	1	8	10	10	3,8889	%78
22	Be difficult to access authentic materials.	13	8	5	2	2	3,1667	%63
23	Prefer to use authentic texts rather than textbooks in my reading classes.	1	-	11	9	9	3,9444	%79
24	Improve students'	-	5	5	5	10	4,3333	%87

	cultural understanding.							
Exposure to authentic materials should start at:								
25	Intermediate levels of language learning.	1	3	6	10	10	3,8322	%77
26	Beginning levels of language learning.	-	3	7	5	15	3,7788	%76
27	Advanced levels of language learning.	1	4	5	10	10	4,3888	%88
I would select authentic materials according to the following factors:								
28	Complexity of grammar structures.	-	1	5	12	13	4,1111	%82
29	Language level.	-	1	4	11	12	4,5556	%92
30	Cultural content.	-	4	6	11	9	4,2778	%86
31	Students' need and interest.	-	4	6	10	10	3,8889	%78
32	Type of the text.	-	3	7	10	10	4,000	%80
33	Percentage of new vocabulary.	-	-	8	11	11	4,3889	%88
34	Length of the text.	2	4	3	11	15	3,7778	%76
35	Students' interests.	-	-	3	11	16	4,2222	%84
I would like to use the following authentic materials in class:								
36	Newspaper.	2	3	5	10	10	3,5556	%71
37	Magazines.	2	3	3	11	10	3,5000	%70
38	articals.	-	-	6	11	13	3,7222	%74
39	Short stories.	1	2	5	11	11	4,3322	%87
40	Internet materials.	-	1	6	10	13	4,1222	%82
41	Tv.	2	4	5	9	10	3,7788	%76
42	Poems.	2	4	6	8	10	2,6667	%53
43	Books.	2	2	6	10	10	2,9443	%59

4.2 Conclusion

During my work, I have found out that authentic materials play an important role in teaching English language. They enrich the traditional lessons and are interesting for students, too.

So, teachers use different materials based on a combination of experiences and preferences, In fact, they indicated that an ideal teaching class should use a combination of both authentic texts and textbooks. The

result shows that student teachers' have s positive attitudes towards using the authentic material.

4.3 Recommendations

1. It is demanding to prepare a lesson with use of authentic materials and it is also not easy to get the materials, too.

2. Most student teachers indicated that the authentic materials help students to increase their knowledge as they occur in their original contexts and not as isolated entities.

2. The student teachers also are recommended incorporating a variety of text types and different up-to-date topics, such as daily world news, education, psychology, health, fashion, sports, etc., in the reading class.

3. The student teachers suggested that EFL teachers give language learners the opportunity to choose some authentic texts to incorporate into their reading classes.

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