

The Effects of Using Authentic Materials on Motivating EFL (English as a Foreign Language) Learners

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DOI: [10.55559/sjahss.v1i12.75](https://doi.org/10.55559/sjahss.v1i12.75)

Received: 04.01.2022 | Accepted: 18.01.2023 | Published: 22.01.2023

Electronic reference (*Cite this article*):

Sabir, G., & Ahmad Hammad, F. (2023). The Effects of Using Authentic Materials on Motivating EFL (English as a Foreign Language) Learners. Sprin Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, 1(12), 40–48. <https://doi.org/10.55559/sjahss.v1i12.75>

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ABSTRACT

This research demonstrates how the usage of authentic materials motivate EFL learners. Furthermore, it covers a literature review on the effect of authentic materials in motivating EFL learners, which will help out English as foreign language professors in designing and teaching their students. In short, the stated chunk of this paper emphasizes on how to use authentic materials in the teaching process to motivate learners.

Keywords: EFL learners, authentic materials, learning process, Afghan context, EFL classes

Literature Review

The Effects of Using Authentic Materials on Motivating EFL Learners

Authentic materials are mainly known as real materials prepared by native speakers and used for native speakers which play a major role in the teaching and learning process particularly in learning a language. The primary goal of authentic materials is to make the language learning process real like for the learners. Through using authentic materials, the learners become motivated to use and practice the newly learned language in their environment which is considered one of the important features in learning a second/foreign language. This important feature is almost ignored in the EFL classrooms. The problems that most EFL learners lose their interest in learning a new language is that from one hand they do not have the real environment to use the target language in. From another hand, the teaching method is stuck in traditional way still where the learners get no opportunity to use the foreign language. This is also one of the main problems in the Afghan context, both the

teachers and the learners are relied on the course books because they use from the materials for teaching purposes not for the communication purpose. Therefore, considering the mentioned problem, the following questions is answered “**what are the effects of authentic materials on students’ motivation in EFL classes**”?

Introduction

The crucial and fundamental goal of investigating the effect of using authentic materials on motivation of EFL learners is to help teachers to open up their teaching skills through applying authentic materials in EFL classes which led them with good classroom environment with clear teaching and learning outcome of their students. This paper determines and build up professional capacity. It is prepared with rich, informative information and objectives to address some of the gaps of the English departments. Moreover, it contains particular information about authentic materials and researchers’ view point on the usage of authentic materials and students’ motivation. These researchers have experienced and implemented these activities with their learners and shared their point of views with others to use and implement authentic materials in EFL classes.

Definition of Authentic Materials

Authentic materials are also called genuine and natural materials which are defined differently by different scholars by holding the same meaning. According to Herod (as cited in Al Azri and Al-Rashidi, 2014) authentic materials are designed to imitate the real world situation. Authentic materials are also considered as printed materials which are used in the classroom the same as it is used in the outside world (Jordan as cited in Al-Azri & Al-Rashidi, 2014). Another definition according to Nunan (1988) is that authentic materials are produced or used for the purpose of language use rather than for the purpose of teaching the language. It is not designed for pedagogical purposes. Authentic materials are vital for learning second language since learning second language needs more motivation and usage. This is authentic materials which makes the language use native like for the language learners. That is how, Kilickaya (as cited in Murray and Belaid, 2015) said that authentic materials are designed for the real language use and for native speakers’ communication not for teaching purposes. The usage of authentic materials is proved effective in all language skills like reading, speaking, listening, and writing. It depends on the method of a particular teacher or on the learning situation that which type of authentic materials the teacher would like to adapt. Swaffar (as cited in Al Azri and Al-Rashidi, 2014) said that the primary goal of authentic materials either oral or written is to communicate meaning. This means that authentic texts must possess an authentic communicative objective just opposite to the purpose of foreign language textbooks, which is to teach language rather than to communicate information.

In the same way, according to other scholars like Little, Devitt and Singleton (as cited in Ahmad Baniabdelrahman, 2006) authentic texts are generated to fulfil some social purpose in the language community in which it was produced. Similarly, for Tomlinson (as cited in Shakir, 2015) an authentic text is one which is produced in order to communicate rather than to teach. The author further emphasized that the text does not have to be produced by a native speaker and it might be a version of an original text which has been simplified to facilitate communication. Sweet (as cited in Murray and Belaid, 2015) believed that natural texts do

justice to every feature of a language whereas artificial texts lack this ability. This means that artificial materials are simply repetition of certain grammatical constructions, certain elements of the vocabulary, certain combinations of words, or almost total exclusion of other features which are equally or even more essential. The part can be concluded by saying that authentic materials are produced for real communication and that the purpose of authentic materials is to communicate meaning and information rather than to teach language. The key to understand what makes materials authentic is to think of them as texts that were not intentionally produced for language classrooms or learners.

Advantages of Authentic Materials on EFL Learners

Authentic materials expose the learners to the real language. Inappropriate material will make them face difficulties in learning a language. Authentic materials placed the students in the context which is related to their real lives. It is sometimes difficult for the students to grasp which is not relevant to them. They pay attention to the materials or to the facts which are known to them rather than to deal with the fictitious facts or to the fictitious people. Therefore, authentic materials are needed for them because they present factual information and concepts. Likewise, motivation plays a vital role in learning a language. No learning can take place without motivation and students can be motivated by using authentic materials in order to make the language use real like. Identically, using authentic materials serves several advantages for the language learners. Peacock (as cited in Al Azri and Al-Rashidi, 2014) presented several reasons for using authentic materials in the classroom. The first reason is that it makes the learners motivated to learn a second language and use it in different contexts. It prepares learners for real language use. The second reason is that it increases learners' level of motivation towards learning second language since it gives cultural information about the target language which makes the learners to learn the language faster. The third reason is that authentic materials are suitable for all levels. It also meets the learners' needs and interests. The fourth reason for using authentic materials in the class is that it encourages teachers to adapt new methodologies and strategies for teaching the language.

Similarly, Oxford (as cited in Ahmad Baniabderahman, 2006) said that authentic materials are produced or designed by native speaker for the usage of native speakers because it contains some difficult vocabularies and structure. Therefore, the author suggested for the teachers that while choosing authentic materials, consider students level, their interest, their choice, and their needs. Besides, he said that using authentic materials are advantageous for second language learners. He added that using authentic materials are enhancing in second language learning because it makes the language learning enjoyable for the learners. It also develops learners' language knowledge, vocabulary, and structure knowledge. The usage of authentic materials also makes learners to focus on the content rather than on the form. A further advantage is that it enables the learners to deal with different situation inside or outside of the classroom. Overall, the usage of authentic materials leads to develop students' language proficiency level and motivation.

Furthermore, as mentioned by Block (as cited in Shakir, 2015) students do appreciate the teachers who prepared the material for the class. He gave three arguments in favor of the materials prepared by the teacher. Firstly, he mentioned when the students themselves are

contextualized in a particular situation they tend to learn more. Secondly, materials prepared by the teacher gave them more personal touch as compared to the course books. Thirdly, most of the time these course books are boring for them. In this way, Block has also favored the use of authentic materials since he considered authentic material more appropriate in comparison to artificial material.

Moreover, Harmer (as cited in Murray and Belaid, 2015) said that using authentic materials develop students' language skills like reading, speaking, and listening skills. Therefore, they can improve students' linguistics and non-linguistics proficiency. It also gives students to practice the language skills in everyday life outside the classroom. He added that using authentic materials increases the level of motivation of the learners which is needed for successful second language learning. Thus, the usages of authentic materials are considered effective in utilizing new methodologies. This is for the purpose of making the language use easy, effective, and real like for the second language learners. Thus, this part could be concluded by mentioning the following points about authentic materials:

- expose learners to language that serves a useful purpose
- provide a refreshing change from the textbook
- focus more closely on learners' interests and needs
- provide information about a variety of topics
- increase learners' motivation
- connect the classroom with the outside world.

Challenges of Authentic Materials

Despite of the advantages that the usages of authentic materials have on the motivation of EFL learners, it has some challenges as well. Gilmore (as cited in Murray and Belaid, 2015) compared authentic versus non-authentic materials. She said that authentic materials are produced for communication purpose where as non-authentic materials are produced for educational or teaching purposes. Another distinction is that an authentic material builds students' communication skills while non-authentic materials focus on form of the language. Authentic materials contain some false starts, some incomplete sentences, and some pauses whereas non-authentic materials are free of such false. Besides, authentic materials prepared students for real language use outside the classroom while non-authentic materials prepare students for leaning spelling, grammar, and pronunciation of the language. Another chief difference between authentic and non-authentic materials is in its naturalness. Authentic materials are natural because they come from real or original sources as they exist in outside classroom while non-authentic materials are purposefully designed for pedagogical purposes.

Comparatively, Kilickaya and Kim (as cited in Zhafarghandi, 2014) mentioned that authentic materials are not proven appropriate for learners in lower level than intermediate since in low level learners do not have adequate lexical and structural knowledge of the language. Therefore, using authentic materials for low level will lead EFL learners to be confused, frustrated, and de-motivated. Another scholar like Kienbaum (as cited in Zhafarghandi, 2014) also believed that there is no difference of using authentic and non-authentic materials in the learning process for children since they could not distinguish between these two. The list below summarized the challenges with using authentic materials:

- the cultural content may seem too unfamiliar
- the content may become obsolete too quickly
- the language may be too difficult
- the vocabulary may be too specialized
- the grammar structures may be too complex
- the preparation may require too much time.

How to Overcome These Challenges?

According to Gilmore (as cited in Murray and Belaid, 2015) authenticity does not necessarily mean ‘good’ just as contrivance does not necessarily mean ‘bad’. Gilmore believed that it is difficult to accurately measure learners’ motivation in classroom-based studies. The author also said that the level of text difficulty is largely dependent on the learning context in which it is used. Therefore, he recommended careful planning, selection and sequencing of materials and tasks to overcome the challenges that the teachers may face when using authentic materials. For instance, the teachers first, can decide to select locally relevant authentic materials in order to avoid materials with unfamiliar cultural content. Next, they can adapt authentic texts in order to match the students’ proficiency level. In addition, they can develop an efficient organizational system that will allow them to gradually create a portfolio of reusable materials. Also, with practice, the teacher will become faster at finding and preparing authentic materials for classroom use. Finally, they may discover exciting ways to empower their students to do more of the work for the teachers—and ultimately, for themselves. Regardless of the challenges, classroom use of carefully selected authentic materials can significantly enrich EFL teaching and learning. In order to put more light on this statement Tomalin (as cited in Isazadeh, 2016) reviewed Krashen’s Input Hypothesis.

Indeed, this Input Hypothesis is a kind of support for the use of locally relevant authentic materials. For example, it is stated in the hypothesis that acquisition occurs when learners are able to comprehend challenging input and that comprehension is helped out by clues related to the situation and context among other factors. The implication of this hypothesis is for EFL classrooms because the challenging input could be comprehensible by making them interesting, engaging, and relevant. In addition, considering the Krashen’s suggestion (as cited in Isazadeh, 2016) the teacher could facilitate activities that promote a constant flow of comprehensible input and meaningful communication by relating it to the situation and context. It means that along with the teachers’ facial expressions, physical gestures, and body language, a variety of audiovisual materials are needed. Finally, the arts, customs, food, holidays, places, situations, and traditions are all considered as local contexts. As a result, to ensure that the input is engaging, interesting, and relevant, and meaningful, the teacher should develop classroom activities based on authentic materials.

The Sources of Authentic Materials

We can find authentic materials from various sources it could be printed and non-printed sources. The printed sources are like magazines, newspapers, articles, menus, brochures, novels, pictures, posters, postcards, drawings and so on and non-printed materials are like audio and visuals. They could be songs, movies, radio programs, TV shows, and YouTube films (Murray & Belaid, 2015). The printed materials get expired soon that is how most of the teachers prefer to use from non-printed materials. For this reason, a research was

done at 10 Libyan university teachers by Murray and Belaid (2015) to find their perceptions and attitudes regarding using printed and non-printed authentic materials.

The research was carried on 10 Libyan university teachers through a questionnaire to find out their perceptions, attitudes, and reactions towards using authentic materials. From the 10 teachers, 7 of them were in the favor of using authentic materials in the classrooms. From the study the researchers found that most of the teachers thought intermediate level the alternative level to use authentic materials for. They also prefer to use from printed materials and internet as the source of authentic materials. Besides, they consider authentic materials more effective for listening, speaking, and reading courses than writing. Furthermore, they considered yearly training as an important factor in using authentic materials for the teachers. Overall, their attitudes, and reactions were positive towards using authentic materials. For this reason, they suggested the regular usage of authentic materials in the classrooms.

By the same token, Al Azri and Al Rashidi (2014) added that by authentic materials we mean using road tickets, road or country maps, cartoons, cooking recipes, restaurant menus, and so on. The authors emphasized that all these materials aid teaching process particularly teaching reading, speaking, and listening skills. Besides, they mentioned that there are eight criteria for choosing authentic materials. First the materials should be relevant to the course book and to the learners' need. Second, the topic should be interested to the students. Third, the materials should be culturally fit or accepted to the learners. Fourth they should have logistical considerations. Fifth, it should respond to the learners' cognitive demands. Sixth, it should also respond to the learners' linguistic demands. Seventh, the quality of the authentic materials should be considered. Eight, the materials should have exploitability.

Likewise, Ahmad Baniabderlrahman (2006) pointed that in the past it was difficult to expose students to the authentic materials due to lack of resources. However, this problem is solved nowadays by having the World Wide Web since it has made the work of the teachers easy. Both teachers and learners can find several related authentic materials and information through the internet. He also added that this is the most favorable source for the teacher because of having up to date and wide range of topics and informations. Since using authentic materials have positive effect on the students' motivation and interest, it is advised to the teachers to use more interesting and effective materials to enhance students' learning. Similarly, Peacock (as cited in Ahmad Baniabdelrahman, 2006) said that utilizing authentic materials are harder in comparison to utilizing non-authentic materials because authentic materials are the sample of real target language use. That is how, authentic materials are more interesting, engaging, motivating, relevant, and culturally enlightening to the learners.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the usage of authentic materials is vital in EFL classroom based on the advantages that it offers for the learners. It encourages and motivated the learners to learn the foreign language. In addition, It also gives students the opportunity to practice the target language in outside of the classroom. The usage of authentic materials aids EFL learners to develop their language skills like reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Similarly, we can have access to the authentic materials through plenty of sources like books, magazines,

article, journals, menus, pictures, videos, cassettes, online materials and so on. Therefore, it is suggested to use both printed and non-printed authentic materials to EFL teacher since the opportunities that authentic materials offer for the EFL learners makes them motivated and eager to learn the language which is the main aim of EFL teaching context.

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