

Authenticity at Sudanese EFL Classes of Tertiary Level: Effectiveness and Challenges

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Abstract

This study aims to approve the effectiveness of using different types of authentic materials to improve EFL writing for the work place at university level. It also investigates the main challenges which face teachers when using such kinds of materials. To achieve this goal, a study was conducted with 103 EFL students of marketing- third year at the Faculty of Business Studies at Sudan University of Science and Technology. The researcher gave the students a pre-test then divided them equally into two groups one experimental and the other is control. The students of the experimental group were taught writing for work place with different types of authentic materials and authentic tasks while the students of the control one were not. After seven weeks the researcher and also by means of test; found out significant differences between the performance of students before and after the treatment which show the improvements of the level of the experimental group. This revealed the effectiveness of using different types and tasks authentic materials in enhancing writing for work place. The interview which was conducted with 12 teachers who teach ESP at three different Sudanese universities at Khartoum State also showed the importance of using authentic materials to teach writing for the work place which will solve the problem that is caused by unaffordable, expensive textbooks. Teachers also believe that using such materials, motivate students and connect them to real world of language usage which creates sense of purpose for learning. Absence of using authentic materials is due to the lack of training on how to use them among teachers. Based on the above mentioned results, the study recommends the use of authentic materials to teach writing for the workplace which is very effective and provides training for the teachers on how to use them.

Keywords: authentic materials, authentic tasks, ESP, workplace

Introduction

Writing in English is a skill that is required in all professions. Students lack motivation and teachers face difficulties in finding effective materials to teach this skill. These problems could be solved through the use of authentic materials .This study aims to approve the effectiveness of using different types of authentic materials to improve EFL writing for the work place at university level. Authentic materials are any materials which are not designed for educational purposes such as magazines ,videos.. etc.

Problem Statement

Teaching ESP is not an easy task at Sudanese EFL classes of tertiary level. It is noticed that the materials that are used for teaching ESP are not available . This study seeks to investigate three dimensions: First; The students who are preparing for a career in marketing face many difficulties in writing texts that relate to their future work place. The difficulties relate to certain aspects such as: The technicalities of the specific document to

be written (CV, report, advertisement, e-mail, note, minutes, etc.). Second; The lack of the ready-made materials used in teaching the subject whether they are locally designed or not as well as their shortcomings. Such materials fail to meet the needs of the students for a number of reasons: first ; They lack authenticity because they are designed by the textbook writers or the materials' producers and they have the disadvantage of having quality of 'one size fits all' and as such they do not appeal to students. Second; Locally produced materials have the disadvantage of meeting the demands for native-like language and as such might lead to break of communication in the international markets. The two types of materials have a serious negative effect on the motivation of students. Finally; Teaching English for the work place needs to be more interactive and needs to adopt authentic tasks, authentic materials and techniques such as simulations and the like. These three levels of the problem are closely related to one another and they have all to be addressed in order to come up with a package of solutions that can effectively and efficiently remedy the situation.

Objectives of the study

1. To identify the possibilities of using authentic materials in EFL classes to reduce difficulties of writing for the work place.
2. To offer different types of authentic materials which can be used to improve writing for work place
3. To find out the main reasons behind the absence of using authentic materials to teach writing for the work place.

Theoretical Framework

This study is experimental in nature. In order to solve the problem of unaffordable textbooks of writing for the work place as well as the weaknesses that students face in this important skill which also may be due to the lack of motivation among them. The researcher designed five lessons by using different types of authentic materials. Some of the authentic materials are written and videoed from international media resources like BBC, but still they are about Sudan. Each lesson in the module has an objective and include different tasks which either authentic or semi authentic. After the five sessions the level of students was improved. The researcher used McGrath (2002) criteria of choosing appropriate authentic texts. These are: (1) Relevance to course book and learners' needs, (2) Topic interest, (3) Cultural fitness, (4) Logistical considerations, (5) Cognitive demands, (6) Linguistic demands, (7) Quality and (8) Exploitability. There are three main criteria used to choose and access texts to be used in the classroom: "suitability of the content, exploitability and readability." as well as the use of Penny Ur scale of correcting written work (2006: 140)

Authentic Text & Authentic Task

Authentic materials are print, video, and audio materials students encounter in their daily lives, such as change-of address forms, job applications, menus, voice mail messages, radio programs, and videos. Authentic materials are not created specifically to be used in the classroom, but they make excellent learning tools for students precisely because they are authentic. Laniro (2007.1)

Authentic task is a task involves learners in using language in a way that replicates its use in 'real world' outside the language classroom. Filling in blanks, changing verbs from the simple past to simple present and completing substitutions tables are, therefore not authentic tasks. Authentic tasks would be answering a letter addressed to the learner,

arguing a particular point of view and comparing various holiday brochures in order to decide where to go for a holiday. Tomlinson (2011:ix).

These views it is clear that authentic tasks are similar to real world tasks of using language. Authentic materials are also real materials which are not created or designed for pedagogical purpose.

Reasons of Choosing Authentic Materials

Edge & Garton (2012:63) explained the reasons why authentic materials are so important into two:

Language

The ability to cope with authentic materials represents the actual goal of language learning, and such materials also often include the difficulties that learning materials tend to avoid. All learners need practice in meeting these real challenges. Even in the early stages, students should learn how to respond to language they do not fully understand.

Motivation

Authentic materials create a direct link with the world outside the classroom, bring the means of learning and the *purpose* of learning closer together, thus increasing motivation.

The use of authentic texts has been supported by Gilmore. (2011:786) Where he approved that the authentic materials and their associated tasks were more effective in developing a broader range of communicative competencies in learners than the textbook materials.

Polio ;(2014:2) supported the use of authentic materials by Saying" When students' exposure is limited to textbook language, they miss out on learning how language is used in real life.

He also approved that authentic materials could be used even with beginners .

All the above mentioned the above mentioned views agree that authentic materials are important . The materials motivate learners and expose them to real usage of language.

Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive analytical approach of quantitative and qualitative data. An experiment is used to measure the effectiveness of using authentic materials to teach writing for the work place. Since this study is done at Sudan University of Science and Technology, the population of the study is the third year students of marketing at the College of Business. Pre and post tests are used with the control and the experimental groups. The total number of students in the class is 103. Twenty of the students pilot the study before conducting the experiment. Participants of the experiment are 70 students. They are equally divided into two groups 35 for the experimental group while the other 35 are the control one.

The study also uses interview. It is conducted with 15 university teachers of English for specific purposes ESP, to investigate

- Whether they use authentic materials to teach writing for work place ,
- Whether they have received any training on how to use authentic materials to teach writing for the work ,
- Why using authentic materials to teach writing for the work place is important

Piloting Study

Before applying the training session and to test the reliability and validity of the tools and the materials, the researcher conducted a piloting study which its result was as follows:

The Pilot Study of the Experiment

Twenty students participated on the Pilot study. Ten was a control group while the other ten was the experimental one. The two groups took a pre -test, the experimental group was taught with the authentic materials while the control group was not. The two groups sat for the same pre-test as a post- test to measure whether the authentic materials have improved the level of writing among the students or not. This pilot study was done first to check the validity and reliability of the test before conducting the study with the large group. It proved the validity and reliability of the tool and the materials of the study

Result of the Pre-Test

Table1

Result of the Piloting Pre Test

| Value | Mean | Std. Deviation | T | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Scale |
|-------------------|------|----------------|-------|----|-----------------|----------------------|
| Control | 1.78 | 0.362 | 0.148 | 9 | 0.88 | Insignificant |
| Experiment | 1.75 | 0.354 | | | | |

Table 1 above shows the chi-square test which is (0.148) by the significant value (0.88) and it is more than probability value (0.05), that means there is insignificant differences.

This result reveals the problem of writing for the work place among the students of marketing. It shows that both the experimental group and the control group share the same level of weaknesses

Result of the Post-Test

Table 2

Result of the Piloting Post Test

| Value | Mean | Std. Deviation | T | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Scale |
|-------------------|------|----------------|--------|----|-----------------|--------------------|
| Control | 1.00 | 0.000 | -7.856 | 9 | .00 | Significant |
| Experiment | 1.60 | 0.242 | | | | |

Table 2 above shows the chi-square test which is (-7.856) by the significant value (0.00) and it's less than probability value (0.05) that means there are significant differences for the Experiment.

The results of test show significant differences in the performance of the two groups for the experimental one. This reveals the effectiveness of using authentic materials to improve writing for the workplace and show the possibility of using such materials to teach writing for the work place.

Reliability Coefficients

Cronbach Alpha Method

Cronbach alpha coefficient = (0.91), a reliability coefficient is high and it indicates the stability of the scale and the validity of the test.

Validity coefficient is the square of the islands so reliability coefficient is (0.95), and this shows that there is a high sincerity of the scale and that the benefit of the study.

Table 3

Reliability Coefficients

| No | Value | Question | Reliability | Validity |
|----|-------------|------------|-------------|----------|
| 1 | | Question 1 | 0.72 | 0.84 |
| 2 | | Question 2 | 0.88 | 0.94 |
| | Pre | | | |
| 3 | | Question 3 | 0.94 | 0.97 |
| 4 | | Question 4 | 0.84 | 0.92 |
| 5 | | Question 1 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| 6 | | Question 2 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| | Post | | | |
| 7 | | Question 3 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| 8 | | Question 4 | 1.00 | 1.00 |

The Interview

The population of the interview is the teachers of English for specific purposes (business English) at universities in Khartoum state. The interview was conducted with 15 university teachers of English for Specific Purposes ESP, university requirements courses as a random sample for the study. This interview aimed to investigate:

- Whether they use authentic materials to teach writing for work place ,
- Have they received any training on how to use authentic materials to teach writing for the work? ,
- Why using authentic materials to teach writing for the work place is important?

Validity and Reliability of the Interview:

The questions of the interview were checked by the same doctors and professors who have checked the tests' questions and the authentic materials used for this study. They reviewed the content, wording, suitability and the ease of the questions. They all mentioned that the content is suitable and relevant and convenient to the purpose of the study. Some changes were made in the wording of some questions, a few were deleted and others were added.

Piloting of the Interview

The researcher piloted the interview questions with 3 teachers. Some modifications were made after the piloting .The researcher also decided to record the interview after asking the subjects to fill consents forms.

Analysis of the Test

The test was conducted before and after the treatment. The sample which was divided into two groups; control group and experimental group all sat for the same test as pre -test before the training sessions for experimental group then they sat together for the same test as post-test. In order to measure and compare the change in the writing performance of the students, the Penny Ur scale was used in this study.(2006: 140) ; scale and method of correction and evaluation was used .Through this method each item in the test is marked and the discussion is done for it under three categories, content, organization and language (COL).The marks were given by two raters who are university lecturer in the same field. The researcher rechecked it by using SPSS program .The researcher aimed to find answers to the following questions:

1. How to use authentic materials to promote writing skills needed in the work place?
2. What are the different types of authentic materials that could be used to improve writing for the work place?
3. To what extent using authentic materials is important and useful in motivating learners and reducing their difficulties in writing for work place?

The results of the performance of the two groups in the pre-test and post-test was as follow:

Comparison of the Control and Experimental Groups Pre-test

This test was administered to the two groups; control and experimental before the participants of the experimental group were subjected to the training program. The researcher documented the performance of the students to compare it with their performance in the post test to see if there is a significant progress or not.

Table 4
Chi-square Test for the Pre- test

| Value | Mean | Std. Deviation | T | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Scale |
|------------|------|----------------|--------|----|-----------------|---------------|
| Control | 1.91 | 0.284 | -1.000 | 34 | 0.32 | Insignificant |
| Experiment | 1.97 | 0.169 | | | | |

Table 4 above shows the chi-square test which is (-1.000) by the significant value (0.32) and it is more than probability value (0.05), that means there are significant differences. This table shows the performance of the control group and the experimental group in the pre-test. The participants did not perform well and there were no differences between the control group and the experimental group in performance. Students in both groups have weaknesses in writing in terms of organization, content and language which are crucial elements in writing.

Comparison of the Control and Experimental Groups Post- test

Table 5
Chi-square Test for the Post- test

| Value | Mean | Std. Deviation | T | Df | Sig. tailed) | (2- | Scale |
|-------------------|-------------|----------------|---------------|-----------|--------------|-----|--------------------|
| Control | 1.91 | 0.284 | 19.044 | 34 | 0.00 | | Significant |
| Experiment | 1.00 | 0.000 | | | | | |

Table 5 above shows the chi-square test which is (19.044) by the significant value (0.00) and it is less than probability value (0.05), that means there are significant differences for the Experiment.

This table shows the improvement in the performance of the experimental group. Students who studied five different topics and skills of writing for the work place through the use of authentic materials this means that authentic materials can be used alone in teaching and can enhance students' levels in writing for the work place.

Results of Experimental Group

Table 6
Chi-square Test - Experimental Group Sum

| Value | Mean | Std. Deviation | T | Df | Sig. tailed) | (2- | Scale |
|-------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|-----------|--------------|-----|--------------------|
| Pre | 1.97 | 0.169 | -34.000 | 34 | 0.00 | | Significant |
| Post | 1.00 | 0.00 | | | | | |

Table 6 above shows the chi-square test which is (-34.00) by the significant value (0.00) and it's less than probability value (0.05), that means there is significant differences for the post-test.

Results of the Control Group**Table 7**
Chi-square Test - Control Group

| Value | Mean | Std. Deviation | T | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Scale |
|-------------|--------|----------------|--------|----|-----------------|----------------------|
| Pre | 1.8000 | 0.42164 | | | | |
| | | | -1.000 | 9 | 0.343 | Insignificant |
| Post | 1.9000 | 0.31623 | | | | |

The above table 7 shows the chi-square test which is (-1.000) by the significant value (0.343) and it's great than probability value (0.05), that means there is insignificant differences for the control.

After students of the experimental group had gone over a training programme of five sessions, the same pre-test was administered to the two groups again; control group and experimental group. The result shows the significant difference in the score of students in the control group and the students in the experimental group which reveals that the participants in the experimental group who had the training programme improved after the sessions while the control group students who did not have exposure to the programme still have the same weaknesses in their performance in writing .

The training program in which the researcher used different types of authentic materials including their authentic tasks to teach five writing sessions was very successful according to the results of the experimental group compared to the control group, these results achieved and matched the first and the second hypotheses which say that:

1. Authentic materials can enhance writing for the work place effectively.
2. There are different authentic materials that could be used to teach writing for the work place.

Analysis of the Interview

The second tool used for this study was the interview which was conducted with 15 English language teachers . Four of them have PhD while the rest have master degree. Four of them from University of Khartoum, seven from Sudan University of Science and Technology college of education and college of languages. While the other four lectures are from Elneelin University faculty of Arts. All of them either taught ESP or are still teaching it. In the interviews, focus was on three major themes. The teachers were given the interview questions in advance, and they had time to reflect over the questions before the interview (One teacher, however, received the questions at the time of the interview). The interviews were done in their offices. Each interview lasted for about 20 to 30 minutes, and was recorded. Each interviewee had signed a consent form before the interview.

The interviews were there after transcribed, and given back to the respondents for comments and correction. Their comments on copies are used as the data for the analysis. The interviews result is as follow:

1. The Possibility of Using Authentic Materials to Teach Writing for the Work Place Such as TV Advertisements

100 % of the subjects have positive attitude towards the possibility of using authentic materials in teaching writing for the work place and they think that authentic materials can be used to stimulate learners to write if they carefully selected .

- Dr. AM from the U of K: said:" Yes, I think it is easy, but it depends on students' level of proficiency in the language. But it is easy and can be done in the classroom."
- AS from SUST said: "It is useful and interesting"
- MD from Elneelin University " Advertisements could be used to stimulate learners to write if they are carefully used according to students' level in the language"

This achieves the first hypothesis that claims; " Authentic materials can effectively enhance writing for the work place."

2. Training on How to Use Authentic Materials to Teach Writing for the Work Place

A great number which represents 87% from the subject did not receive any training on how to use authentic materials to teach writing for the work place or teach in general. Only two of the subjects were trained since, one of them studied in Malaysia and the other one did his master in the UK. In spite of the fact that training is a crucial factor in using such kind of material, but it is neglected , teachers need to be trained well on how to use the different types of authentic materials effectively and raise the awareness among them. This achieved the hypothesis number 3 *which claims that: "The lack of teachers' training is the main reason behind the absence of using authentic materials to teach writing for the work place."*

The Affordability and Availability of the ESP Text Books of Business English.

100% of the subject agreed that ESP books are not affordable, they are so expensive.

SA from Elneelin University said:" Well it is affordable for me only, not for students since the institute provide them to me with their CDs , student's book and teachers' book. Students use copies from them.

NA from SUST said " The text books are not only expensive, but it is also difficult to be found"

Dr.AM from U of K said:" No. unfortunately they are very expensive, sometimes if you want to buy them and students are willing to buy, they are not found this shows that using authentic materials is important to motivate learners and promote their writing is important.

The Use of Authentic Materials Like Real CVs, Newspapers and Actual Reports by the ESP Teachers.

67 % of the subject do not use their CV to teach how to write CV in their classes only 5 teachers, 33% of the teachers who use their CV , 2 of them use it very rare.

Twelve teachers who represent 80% of the subject do not use newspapers and three of the participants who represent 20% of the subjects do not use actual reports in their classes.

YS from the U Of K who is one of the three that use actual reports in their classes he said: "Yes sometimes, I have done this twice in school of Business. I face difficulties of vocabulary that students are not familiar with in large classroom."

All of those who do not use actual reports in teaching how reports are written have no clear justifications for not using them and they did not deny their availability or usefulness some of them think it is possible and they plan to use them in the future.

SG from SUST said: "No, it takes time, even students are not willing to do this."

MD from Elneelin University said: "No. I have not thought of that, but I think it is possible."

The three of the subjects who use newspaper in their business classes have used them differently, for other purposes.

Dr. AN from the U of K said: "Yes, available I adapt them; I write the text from newspaper and hide the mistakes from the original newspaper text that includes mistakes."

SA from Elneelin University said: "Well, I did it once when I was teaching English for accounting, I used some extracts from Sudanese newspapers, and it did not work very well."

This achieved hypothesis 3. *"The lack of teachers' training is the main reason behind the absence of using authentic materials to teach writing for the work place"*.

The Use of Authentic Tasks to Teach English for the Work Place.

80% of the subjects do not ask their learners to email them while they are teaching them how to write an email. Most of them use email for other purposes like sending assignments which is not compulsory. The rest of the subjects do so and believe that it is very important now in this age of technology. *The lack of teachers' training is the main reason behind the absence of using authentic materials to teach writing for the work place.*

Limitations

This study is limited to the third year students of Sudan University of science and Technology Faculty of Business Administration- department of Marketing . It is also Limited to Sudanese university teachers of English language in the year 2015 to 2016 at Khartoum State.

Recommendations

The study shows the effectiveness of using authentic materials and authentic tasks to enhance writing for the work place at university level. So, the researcher recommends the use of authentic materials to teach writing for the workplace which is very effective and provides training for the teachers on how to use them.

Conclusion

Authentic materials and authentic tasks can be effective way of enhancing students level of performance in writing for the workplace. They motivate students by giving them purpose for learning and solve the problem of unaffordable materials. I advise teachers to use authentic materials as well as to receive a training course on how to use such kind of materials.

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