

AN EXAMINATION OF TEXT AUTHENTICITY USED AT KENT STATE
UNIVERSITY ESL CENTER: READING MATERIALS, THE INSIGHTS AND
PERCEPTIONS OF ESL/EFL STUDENTS AND INSTRUCTORS

A dissertation Submitted to the
Kent State University College of Education, Health and Human Services
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

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December 2014

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AN EXAMINATION OF TEXT AUTHENTICITY USED AT KENT STATE
UNIVERSITY ESL CENTER: READING MATERIALS, THE INSIGHTS AND
PERCEPTIONS OF ESL/EFL STUDENTS AND INSTRUCTORS (144 pp.)

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English language learners need to be exposed to and have access to the same language native speakers typically use and to communicate in a natural way. Authentic materials can provide this access for learners with alternative to the traditional textbooks and introduce them simultaneously to the target language and its culture in their classroom. This study examines the nature, the extent, and the use of authentic materials that are used in reading classes in the ESL Center at Kent State University. Moreover, the study explores the instructors' and students' insights and perceptions towards using the authentic materials in reading to learn English. Data are collected through text analysis, focus groups and a survey.

The findings of the analysis reveal that reading textbooks that are used at the ESL Center require some extra authentic materials that assist the students to function in the English language environment and learn the daily language that the native speakers use in everyday circumstances. The focus groups analysis indicate that instructors believe that authentic materials are valuable for improving reading skills and vocabulary learning. Last, the survey analysis shows that the students have much interest to use authentic materials in reading classes and students prefer the internet reading texts as a source of

authentic materials. Most students believe that authentic materials assist them to build new vocabulary, idioms, slang and daily life vocabulary.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I cannot express enough thanks to my committee for their continued support and encouragement: Thanks to Dr. Wendy Kasten, Dr. William Bintz, and Dr. Sarah Rilling. I offer my sincere appreciation for the learning opportunities provided by the committee.

My completion of this study could not have been accomplished without the support of my family and friends. Thanks to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Laba for their continuous support and their prayers for me to stay strong along this long journey. Their effort will not be forgotten. My gratitude is also for my son Amer. I appreciate his patience while I am engaged and unavailable to assist him with his studies.

Finally, to my caring and supportive husband, Khalid: I offer my deepest gratitude. Your encouragement when the times got rough are much appreciated and duly noted. It was a great comfort and relief to know that you were willing to provide management of our household activities while I completed my work.

My sincere thanks

Amal Laba

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Materials that are used for teaching English as a foreign language are numerous, but most of these materials are prepared by authors and educators for language teaching purposes. These materials or textbooks usually focus on teaching the structure and the grammatical aspects of the English language. In other words, there is much emphasis on teaching English proficiency skills rather than teaching real language that students need to interact with and communicate in the real world (Berry, 2000; Burns, 1998; Cane, 1998).

However, English language learners need to be exposed to and have access to the same language native speakers typically use and to communicate in a natural way (Hart, 2003). Authentic materials can provide this access for learners with alternative to the traditional textbooks and introduce them simultaneously to the target language and its culture in their classroom. Therefore, English language learners feel motivated because they can communicate ideas and meanings rather than concentrating on the structure of the target language.

Printed authentic materials could include variety of forms such as menus, posters, announcements, maps, brochures, restaurant menus, posters, announcements, tickets, newspaper articles, and magazine articles. These are not hard to find by teachers and they can collect what suits the students' interests and levels. These materials, if used in reading classes, can be a great help for students to learn basic skills such as skimming and scanning and finding specific information in a reading text. Other authentic materials

could be audio sources such as conversations or radio shows and audio-visual materials such as movies or TV programs.

Statement of the Problem

As a teacher of English as a foreign language, the materials I use are usually textbooks designed to teach the integrated skills of English British teacher specialists who prepared most of these books, but some contents were not helping the Libyan students to talk and use what they have learned inside and outside school. Therefore, the Libyan board of education started to design textbooks with collaboration between Libyan teachers and English teacher specialists. The lessons in the new textbooks have more authentic texts that deal with families' relations, and everyday functions and themes such as shopping, traveling and applying for jobs. From the experience I mentioned above, I think that teaching materials represent a crucial element of teaching English as a foreign or a second language. There is a heavy reliance on using commercial textbooks which deal with learners as a single context with no attention to their backgrounds, cultural aspect and their future goals of learning the English language. These textbooks are produced for various foreign students with different backgrounds and conditions and whose goals and needs vary (Tomlinson, 2003).

English language learners (ELLs) need materials that take into consideration the meaningful use of the foreign language and learners' individual experiences.

For example, some Libyan students need to learn English because it is used in the job market like working with international companies that use only the English language in

their communication. Therefore, these students need to master the English language to be able to talk and write reports in the English language.

In my opinion, these students would benefit from learning through authentic materials that include job applications, job advertisements, writing reports or emails more than studying literature texts. When only one resource of English language teaching text is used for all students regardless of their needs, the students end up with learning knowledge that is irrelevant to their situation and that will not profit them in their future needs. Teaching materials for these learners need to engage them in tasks that enhance their English skills and communicative abilities (Ellis, 1985; Krashen, 1981). Therefore, authentic materials should be geared to their language and constitute a good source of language forms and functions. These materials can be addressed in English teaching programs in general and in reading classes in specific so learners can learn real language that they will interact with outside the classroom.

There are various definitions for authentic materials, but the definition that is adopted in this study refers to authentic materials as “using examples of language produced by native speakers for some real purpose of their own rather than using language produced and designed solely for the classroom” (Cook, 1981, p. 1).

Background of the Study

From my own experience, after graduating with a degree in English in Libya, I had a chance to visit England and I was confident that there would be no problem to speak English and communicate with English people. My assumption was not all true because I had to go to the bank there to withdraw some money. First of all, I didn't know

whom I should speak with and what I wanted to ask; I didn't know which word is used for the "Bank Teller". Next, someone showed me the cashier and went to talk to him, but was not able to explain that I needed to withdraw money because I had never learned the verbs "withdraw" or "to deposit" in my English language textbooks at school although I have been learning English for a long time. These situations were frustrating because I feel that I spent so much time learning English, but still I was not able to communicate in real life situations. My blame goes to the books that emphasize teaching structures of the language rather than language in contexts for daily use.

I have experienced first-hand the effect of using authentic materials when I used a course book that included different authentic texts, topics and conversations of everyday situations to teach listening and speaking for the employees of one oil company in Libya. These employees were studying English as a foreign language because they had to use it in their work and they were also required to be proficient in the language to get an overseas course in one of the English speaking countries. I felt that this course helped me focus on teaching the English language usage instead of teaching language structures. Students needed to use the language in everyday life not only to learn its structure.

After getting my Master's degree in teaching English as a Foreign Language I had another chance to use the same course book for listening and speaking for first year students in the English department of the University of Tripoli in Libya. The students showed much interest in learning and performed a lot of role plays using the conversations of that book which helped them at the end of the year to achieve strong skills in communication.

When I used authentic materials for the second time in teaching the undergraduate students at the English department of University of Tripoli in Libya, the course book I used was a simplified authentic text; therefore, the students found it helpful and engaging in the foreign language and its culture. On the other hand, using authentic materials can be hard for learners and as a result they reduce students' confidence and motivation. Therefore, I recommend using the authentic materials only with teachers' scaffolding and guidance.

What I think is important about using authentic materials in teaching is the positive impact they have on the teaching methods that ESL teachers use in their classrooms. These materials are also helpful for students who are eager to travel or study in a foreign country. Students become familiar to different items in their readings that they will meet every day. As I mentioned in my experience of using authentic texts with the employees of the oil company, I met some of the employees whom I thought using the authentic materials after more than one year of that course, and they told me that they found the authentic course very practical and they used a lot from its conversations in the banks, railway stations, hotels and other different situations while they were in England.

I had another experience to teach English for a high school in Libya in the 1980s and all high schools were using the same series of the book with different language proficiency levels. The author built the content of the book on one rural family who works on a farm. The language that was used in the content of the book was all dealing with agriculture terms, farming tools and procedures. I was unluckily teaching that book and feeling that students were bored to study those lessons that they do not benefit from

while they all live in urban cities. When I felt that my students and I are not interested in learning and teaching such content, I decided to quit teaching and went back to school to pursue my graduate studies and determined not to go back to teaching until the administration of education changes the books or gives teachers freedom to choose different materials according to their choices. After three years the books were changed by the administration and substituted with others that focus more on functional topics like shopping, traveling and families. I returned to teaching and my students started using the contents that I believe they need in reality to help them learn English and use it in their everyday situations.

If these authentic materials are used in our ESL classrooms we can have students who are able not only to study a new language, but also to be able to improve their language skills and communicate in that language. In addition, the impact can influence the curriculum developers who look for practical approaches that improve the teaching process and education in general.

Significance of the Study

This study examines the authentic texts that are used in teaching reading with the students in the ESL center at Kent State University. In addition, the study seeks the insights and perceptions of instructors and students towards using the authentic materials in the ESL classes.

Although many studies have proven the usefulness of authentic materials in teaching English as a second language, few studies have been conducted to examine the

authentic reading texts used in the ESL context in addition to finding the teachers' and students' insights towards the use of authentic materials in the ESL classes.

Moreover, there are no previous studies in the ESL Center to examine the authentic texts or to elicit the ESL students' and teachers' perceptions in using authentic texts in reading. Therefore, this study provides insights whether students find authentic materials helpful to learn real language, improve their reading skills, and use these materials content in their future needs. The study can determine whether teachers use any authentic texts, how they use them, what kinds they use and whether they find them valuable in the reading classes.

The current study of examining the authentic texts in reading classes can be informative generally for the field of teaching English as a second language and specifically for teacher educators. These teachers are concerned on adopting authentic materials that assist students to function appropriately in learning English as a second language. In addition, the study can draw the attention of curriculum developer to the value of introducing authentic texts in the syllabus for ESL learners. The results of the study can present analysis in authentic texts that might reveal other related issues that require to be examined in adopting authentic texts in teaching reading with the ESL context.

Research Questions

The research questions of this study:

1. What is the nature, extent and the use of authentic materials in learning English as a second language at the ESL Center at Kent University?

2. What are the insights and perceptions of ESL instructors about the authentic materials in reading at the ESL Center?
3. What are the ESL students' insights and perceptions of using authentic materials in reading at the ESL Center?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the authentic materials that are used in reading classes in the ESL Center at Kent State University. For example, what's the amount of authentic texts that are used in teaching, what types of authentic materials are used and how are they used? Moreover, the study aims to explore the instructors' and students' insights and perceptions towards using the authentic materials in reading to learn English. The instructors' perceptions are considered as data source to inform the study about the type and effectiveness of authentic materials they use, to what levels and what standards they use to choose these materials. The students' perceptions is the third source of data and their insights determine if authentic texts help to improve their language proficiency in general and their reading skills in specific.

The ESL Center, where the study is conducted, works to teach English as a second language for international students who wants to pursue their undergraduate or graduate studies in the United States. The English language syllabus that is currently used in the ESL Center is using series of textbooks for reading skills (Appendix D). These textbooks are classified according to the level of students and they start from beginners' level to the advanced level in a ten level program.

Limitation of the Study

- The study is limited to the ESL instructors and learners in the ESL Center at Kent State University.
- The students' participants are from intermediate and advanced level according to language proficiency and no other levels are included.
- The study examines authentic reading texts in the reading skill only and instructors' and students' perceptions on using authentic texts. The study doesn't include examining authentic texts that are used in any other language skills.

Definition of Terms

- ESL refers to the program of teaching English as a second language where the learners study in an English speaking country.
- EFL refers to the program of teaching English as a foreign language where the learners do not live in an English speaking country. (E.g. Libyan students who study English in Libya).
- ELL(s) refers to the English language learners.
- TESL refers to teaching English as a second language.
- L1 refers to first language or the native language.
- L2 refers to the second language.
- TOEFL refers to the Test of English as a Foreign Language.
- IELTS "IELTS, the International English Language Testing System, is designed to assess the language ability of candidates who need to study or work where English is the language of communication" (ILETS Exams, 2013, p.1).

- ESL context refers to Kent State University ESL Center, instructors who teach in the Center and the ESL students who learn there.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I discuss the current situation in using teaching materials for the English as Second Language learners (ESL); these materials' strength and weakness. Furthermore, I consider the use of authentic materials as effective teaching materials that can improve the EFL learners' ability to communicate and use the English language in everyday life.

Current Materials Used for Teaching English: Weaknesses and Strengths

English language teachers usually use traditional materials like textbooks to teach EFL and ESL students. These books are usually produced in England by Oxford Press or Cambridge Press and that is what most Arabic countries such as Libya depend on for teaching English. Authors of these books design them to teach all EFL/ESL learners, but without much consideration to their backgrounds or different learning needs. Some problems of these materials are that they are used to teach students as if they have similar cultures and similar goals in learning English. Another concern, that these materials are too simplified. They focus mostly on teaching grammar and writing and neglect the importance of using the language in communication that deals with everyday life situations.

The first issue with a common teaching text is the simplicity of texts and the focus on structure of the language (Allen, 2008; Laamri, 2009). The textbooks for ESL elementary level are designed with limited vocabulary and forms that do not help students to convey messages or benefit from challenging activities. These selected forms

of language are simplified for the purpose of learning; therefore, learners find difficulty when they face a real life situation when they are supposed to speak and understand more complicated structures in the foreign language. Therefore, these textbooks cannot meet the students' needs of learning texts which can be suitable for their level and context.

The second issue of using traditional teaching materials is that English language teachers find it easier to have ready planned texts with all integrated skills to teach. These teachers usually teach from textbooks or commercial materials that schools adopt. There are different books for teaching basic English language skills and others are for test preparations like TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and IELTS (International English Language Testing System) (Oura, 2003). Using these textbooks aid teachers in their preparation and makes it easier to use by providing all the tasks and activities the learners need to do and also some evaluation tasks. It is true that these prepared materials are available to teachers and sometimes schools can afford them, but these materials prepare students for the test and cannot provide them with all they need to learn for English as a communicative tool.

The last issue in ESL/EFL teaching materials is that some textbooks emphasize teaching grammar, writing, reading, and give less focus on conversational skills (Berry, 2000; Burns, 1998; Cane, 1998). Nunan (1991) believes that traditional material writers establish textbooks by concentrating on grammar, phonology, and lexical parts that accordingly direct the activities to be on the same track. Due to this traditional structural method, students are able to read and write, but usually find difficulties in understanding native speakers' conversations on TV shows or radio programs, for example. They also

experience difficulties while using English to communicate at public places like airports or railway stations when they travel and need to use the English language.

Although ESL/EFL textbooks lack many essential skills for students, they have some depth that make teachers depend heavily on using them. The textbooks and other non-authentic materials are valuable to use in elementary levels of teaching English. Students need to learn about the structure of language and how to read and write when authentic materials are not convenient for them to start with. They need to be prepared with traditional texts until they feel comfortable to understand genuine texts. Laamri (2009) indicates that non-authentic materials usually present these features: a) Simulations which introduce settings and interactions that are similar to everyday life; b) Suitability of materials that means they are well prepared to cope with the students' levels and age; c) *Easiness* which means that the structures of language, intonations, speed are simple and within students' reading ability; d) *Limitations* which refers to limited themes, words and length of materials; e) *Appropriateness* that means the materials are suitable for teaching context. These characteristics of non-authentic materials present their worth to use with English language learners in their first stages of learning English.

In addition to helping ESL/ EFL learners with the structure of English language, the lessons of textbooks are provided with goals and objectives of each part in the lesson. So teachers do not have to think about these when they prepare their lessons. The activities of the books are also designed to suit each function of the lesson so teachers do not have to prepare them as well. The structure of the lessons in textbooks is usually skills-based and teachers move from one skill to another spontaneously. Learners'

expectations are clear as they know what they will study and what they will work on. This could save much time as learners could prepare previously what they will study in the next lesson. In addition, the textbooks usually have assessment parts that evaluate the students understanding of each lesson. These assessment activities are flexible and can be used in class or even at home if some students miss the class. There are some useful textbooks and they are effective if they are used in a way to help learners achieve their needs.

Traditional Materials According to Language Theories and Research in Foreign Language Development

Language theorists and language materials developer argue the benefits and shortcomings of traditional materials in teaching, such as textbooks and the class tasks that can be used in learning process (Ellis, 1985; Richards& Rodgers, 2001). Modern theories of language learning emphasize the learner's experience in the learning process and the change from behaviourism to constructivism, which are defined below, indicates the necessity for material development for language learners (Hart, 2003). The following are some theories and research that discuss teaching materials for EFL learners.

Many theories discuss whether English language learners should base their learning on grammar or on developing communication skills (Bloomfield, 1933; Mowrer, 1960; Richards, 2009). When the focus was on learning grammar, the beliefs were in the past that language is processed mechanically by routine practice (Staats, 1968). Therefore, students learn the language by constructing correct language structure without errors. Teachers control learning by using drills and dialogues to memorize.

Recently, these beliefs of controlled learning are changed and language learning has new perceptions to more focus towards improving communication (Ellis, 1985; Krashen, 1981; Larsen-Freeman, 1991; McLaughlin, 1987). These researchers believe in teaching language communicatively. Learning a language in their beliefs requires communicative interactions of learners, collaboration and creation of effective language situations. Learners use the language to discuss meanings to achieve understanding and exchange feedback. Learners understand new language forms and develop their language use by trying to articulate meanings in different ways (Richards, 2009).

Linguistics theories of language learning concentrate on a *genetic mechanism*, which refers to universal grammar (Hart, 2003). Teaching according to universal grammar highlights grammar drills as a regular practice in classrooms. The behaviourists' belief in language teaching describes theoretical objectives that are separate for the learners and their settings (Bloomfield, 1942; Hull, 1943; Skinner, 1948; Thorndike, 1905; Watson 1930). The language is presented in structured rules and content is supported through unrealistic exercises (Richards, 2006). Learning English in this way might produce learners who know about the language, but are not able to use it because the focus is on content.

The constructivists' stance is that language learners should interact in different real life activities to improve understanding of language usage instead of learning the rules of it. Therefore, learning is a process of understanding in social settings (Brooks & Brooks, 1993; Hart, 2003; Naylor & Keogh, 1999; Noddings, 1990; Von Glasersfeld, 1995).

One of the constructivists' beliefs for the learners to study effectively is to be involved in authentic learning surroundings (Oguz & Bahar, 2008; Sherman & Kurshan, 2005). In authentic learning settings, the students have the opportunities to work on lifelike problems, play a part in tasks that solve practical problems or produce a project that has a purpose in the actual life settings. Therefore, the features of authentic learning are to structure knowledge and complete related tasks; to relate the students' activities to real life skills; to continue learning out of classroom contexts such as work and home; to learn in a collaboration environment (Oguz & Bahar, 2008).

The role of the teacher in constructivists teaching as a guide, a facilitator and a designer who tries to design tasks that are built around the constructivists' stance (Brooks & Brooks, 1993; Caine, Caine & McClintic, 2002; Marlowe & Page, 1998; Sherman & Kurshan, 2005). In these tasks, the teacher incorporates real life situations by using authentic materials. The source and the role of these authentic materials should be carefully selected. In addition, these materials should interest the students and involve them in solving problems to build on their understanding and experience. The goals from using the authentic materials according to the constructivists are to emphasize the interaction of students within their background settings and relate what they learn to their previous knowledge. Authentic materials also require working in teams and evoke students' questions that lead to better understanding and evaluation of the language learning facts (Cui, 2010; Sherman & Kurshan, 2005).

Approaches for Teaching English as a Foreign Language

There are various approaches for teaching English as a foreign language such as the grammar translation approach, the reading approach and the audio-lingual approach. The grammar translation approach emphasizes teaching the structure of the language and explains the content through translation (Brown, 1994; Cunningham, 2000; Damiani, 2003; Stern, 1991). Since this study works with ESL students, it is worth to describe some teaching methods that are used with these students. The Reading approach focuses on reading comprehension with limited attention to teaching grammar or oral communication. The audio lingual approach aims to improve speaking through listening and using drills to practice the language.

While each of the previous approaches focuses on one teaching skill on behalf of the others, the communicative approach focuses on teaching through interactions to understand meanings and get feedback to develop learners' communicative abilities to use the language. Savignon (1997) states that some terms like “task based, process-oriented, interactive, inductive, and discovery oriented, CLT -communicative language teaching- cannot be found in any one textbook or set of curricular materials” (p.22). The dedication to keep texts as the main source of teaching doesn't serve the purpose of communicative teaching. The communicative approach as a theory of intercultural communicative competence is capable of working in developing teaching materials for learning settings to reflect more sources of communication (Savignon, 1979).

Another approach for teaching materials is the situational approach. Typically stages of the situational approach (a method that uses everyday situations as themes for teaching goals) as presentation, practice, and production, have been used in teaching

materials and are still used in adapted procedures (Nunan, 1995; Richards, 2006; Richard & Rodgers, 2001). Richards (2006) states that a grammar based lesson in current teaching materials starts first with an introduction for the item to be taught with emphasis on understanding or identifying it. Next, students practice the new item in a content given by the teacher in controlled setting. Lastly, students practice the new concept in free setting to improve oral skills using the new content. This orderly way of learning grammar, doesn't have reliability from a linguistic point of view and is replaced by interactive oral activities to learn the grammar that students need for their interaction (Nunan, 1991; Richards, 2006).

The social theory is an additional approach that supports the interaction between students, teachers and teaching materials (Donato, 1994; Gutiérrez, 2003; Haas, 1996; Ohta, 2000; Swain, 2000; Warschauer & Kern, 2000). Learning as interaction between learners and teachers requires the learners to have the opportunity to practice what they learn and experience in classrooms. Vygotsky's social theory approach views learning as social interactions and learners should use what they learn in the classroom to relate that to their community and communicate. Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes engagement of learners in contextualized settings away from just using answer sheets. From this point of view, classroom material content should work as a tool that connects students to the world outside the classroom and not to prepare them for tests. The content needs to be rich with interaction models and activities that can be practiced in class and present what is going on in the real world.

Researchers also argue the use of teaching textbooks and their shortcomings in assisting the ESL/ EFL learners (Gilmore, 2011; Nunn, 1991; Richards, 2006; Tomlinson, 2010). Although textbooks are a good source for English language learners, they are usually designed according to the authors' insights of teaching the language. These authors sometimes reflect how teachers prefer to teach the language and produce commercial materials that attract them. Certain principles are recommended in the creating of materials (Tomlinson, 2010). Many authors do not follow teaching principles and many assume that comprehensible presentations with related activities are enough to acquire the language. Tomlinson (2010) thinks that ESL/EFL teaching materials should not be reproductions of any former effective material, but they should apply these principles:

1. Language acquisition theories: The material development should result from language acquisition assumptions that can assist to build standards for developing and evaluating teaching materials. Developing teaching materials requires considering local standards taken from learners' background and their learning setting.
2. Teaching principles: Teaching methods and the contents should go in harmony with the course purpose and the learners' needs. Teaching techniques should support the learners in language development as well as language acquisition. Learners are supposed to have chances to develop their critical and creative abilities and to team up and build confidence consequently.

Modern Knowledge of How Foreign Language Functions

Written and spoken texts are important for teaching materials and these should grant the learners with models of language usage in different forms and topics. The learners should be presented with authentic language as it is regularly used in daily life such as eating in restaurants or making hotel reservations so they have the ability to use it for practical purposes (Tomlinson, 2010).

Many current textbooks depend on the traditional way of describing English language which focuses on the structure and grammatical aspects and teaching what authors know about teaching, although some improvements in recent years have been observed (Gilmore, 2011; Tomlinson, 2010). Gilmore describes materials as “impoverished or distorted sample of the target language to work with, and fail to meet their communicative needs” (Gilmore, 2011, p. 791).

In addition, the materials used for foreign language study usually depend on made- up discourse that the authors use to explain certain items in the list of syllabus structure. For example, most authors present teaching the present tense before teaching the past tense. The dependence on the authors’ insights has regularly led to incorrect foreign language representations (Gilmore, 2011). For example, textbooks usually are designed to teach the present tense in the first lessons so students cannot talk about any past experiences because the past tense is taught in more advanced lessons.

First Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning

Acquiring a language is different from learning a language. First language acquisition and learning a second language have different learning order (Krashen, 1982).

In this section, I provide definitions of first language acquisition and second language learning and the differences between them.

First language acquisition (L1) is a natural process of acquiring the first language. It is the way children acquire their first language “acquisition is "picking-up" a language” (Krashen, 1982, p.14). In other words, it is a process that happens without explicit teaching and learning.

People share the natural ability to acquire language. Humans in general have the instinctive capacity to acquire language; in other words *universal grammar* (Kosur, 2011). The acquisition process of first language appears naturally without the need of clear teaching instructions to learn the language. Children who grow up in bilingual atmosphere just pick up both languages as their first language (Kosur, 2011). For example, children who have Arabic and English parents will acquire English language and Arabic language as their first language without needs of teaching guidance.

Second language learning (L2) is different from learning first language. Learning a language is *knowing about* it (Krashen, 1982). Contrary to first language acquisition, learning a second language requires teaching instructions. In learning a language, generally, the learner understands deliberately its rules first, and then he practices it over and over until it is *automatic* (Krashen, 1982). Second language learning works well with error corrections’ assistance and clear explanations of language rules (Krashen, 1981). In other words, the brain of the second language learner needs explicit explanation of how patterns of a new language are constructed and used. Second language learning is as complex as acquiring the first language, but with many other

factors affecting learning (Clark, 2000). Some of these factors are age, culture, personal attitudes, learning strategies and motivation. These factors explain why learners of a second language cannot achieve perfection as first language learners do.

The Differences between First Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning

When we acquire our first language we do not have to put forth much effort to master it. Therefore, first language acquisition is mainly unconscious procedure and the acquirers are not attentive that they are acquiring a language, but they are conscious that they are applying the language to communicate messages (Krashen, 1982). On the other hand, learning a second language involves a long time of studying with the help of teachers and instructions. Consequently, second language learning is an active process that involves learning the rules of the language consciously and has the ability to discuss them (Krashen, 1982). The following are some points of differences between L1 and L2 as summarized by Cook (2010):

1. The absence of another language in the native child's mind: The child who acquires his first language doesn't have any previous language in his brain while the second language learner does (Cook, 2010; Weinreich, 1953). This is the first difference between both learners which is the state of the mind; second language learning varies from first language acquisition because the learner requires first and second language in learning every aspect of the new language (Cook, 2010).
2. The relative age of the L2 learner: Age plays an obvious factor in learning a second language (Clahsen & Muysken, 1989; Cook, 2010). L2 learners are usually

older than L1 learners, but it is not a specific age that prevents from learning L2. It is the system of the memory, the cognitive capacity and the social atmosphere of that specific age (Cook, 2010). Thus, the factor is not precisely the age, but the inescapable links to age.

3. Variations in circumstances of learners and language input: Second language learners have different situations (Cook, 2010; Kellerman et al., 2005; Norton, 2000; Piller, 2002). Some learn the language in small groups, others learn it internationally. Some learn to use the language for specific roles; while others learn it to use it for universal purposes. As I mentioned previously, L1 is a different process from L2 process and this raises the question of shall teachers teach the language naturally as a child acquire his first language or artificially with language instructions. The language input of L1 is different from the language input of L2. Parents usually simplify their speech when talking to children. Native speakers also simplify their talking to a non-native speaker, but never in the same way as parents do with children. Teaching texts use simplified languages, but what teaching situations need is the simplified interaction more than simplified language (Bruner, 1983; Cook, 2010; Freed, 1980).

Authentic Texts in Research as Effective Teaching Materials for EFL/ESL Learners

Traditional textbooks and other teaching materials that are used in teaching English as a second or a foreign language are usually commercial and used for instructional purposes that convey the authors' stance in teaching (Shrum & Glisan, 1994). The texts in these books use contrived models of language and they do not present

real language that the native speakers use in their daily life situations (Hart, 2003). Most English language learners need to learn the language as a communicative tool and not as a structure to memorize (Savignon, 1997). Some of these learners need to use the language for their future needs, such as to write a job report or email a foreign customer, or even travel to a foreign country and use the language (Marshall, 2002). Authentic texts give the learners confidence that they are using the actual language and that they are close to natives, and the language is the same as it is communicated in the English language context (Guariento & Morley, 2001).

Therefore, the use of authentic materials has expanded due to their efficient role in teaching students English language forms and assisting them to use the language in the real world. I introduce some definitions of authentic materials and their significance in teaching the ESL/EFL learners.

Authentic Materials: Definitions and Significance

Since the general aim of teaching English is to be able to communicate and use the English language for academic and social purposes, teachers are required to emphasize the use of the language in meaningful materials (Richards, 2006). Students are required not to recall what they learn, but to communicate real life tasks. Therefore, I think that the authentic materials expose the students to real language and meet their needs of communication because they are natural and not like other unrealistic traditional materials.

Authentic materials are usually described as texts that are not produced for teaching purposes, but are produced by natives for native speakers (Cook, 1981; Jacobson

& Degener, & Gates, 2003; Morrow, 1977). Authentic materials is “using examples of language produced by native speakers for some real purpose of their own rather than using language produced and designed solely for the classroom” (Cook, 1981, p. 1). Providing students with authentic materials can motivate them because they practice vocabulary in class that they can use outside their classrooms.

Authentic materials can be in written forms, “we mean printed materials used in ways that they would be used in the lives of learners outside of their adult education classes” (Jacobson, Degener & Gates, 2003, p. 1). Printed materials could include maps, brochures or restaurant menus and these are not hard to find by teachers and they can collect what suits the students’ interests and level. Other materials could be audio such as conversation or radio shows and audio-visual materials such as movies or TV programs.

The Relation between Education, Teaching Materials and Real Life

One of the general goals of education is to teach students the experience of life outside school (Dewey, 1997); therefore, the goal of our work as teachers is to relate the curriculum to students’ future needs and interests (Leu & Kinzer, 2000). Using authentic materials with ESL students is one of the approaches that supports relating learning to the real world (Dulay, Burt & Krashen, 1982). These materials motivate the students to use the language in texts that are found for real purposes and not only for school contexts (Krashen, 1989). These real texts assist students not only to communicate in public services like banks or airports, but also help them to interact culturally and socially in real life settings. Consequently, authentic materials expose ESL students to natural talk and

can act as an essential bridge between the class- room and learners' real lives (Robert & Cooke, 2009).

Dewey's work (1897) has been influential in advocating for authentic materials as he believed that:

1) Education is a process of living and not a preparation for future living; 2) The school must represent present life - life as real and vital to the child as that which he carries on in the home, in the neighbourhood, or on the playground; 3) Education which does not occur through forms of life, or that are worth living for their own sake, is always a poor substitute for the genuine reality and tends to cramp and to deaden. (p. 77)

The previous tasks of education by Dewey strengthen the concepts of using effective materials in classrooms that students can apply in their community and experience in actual situations.

Research in curriculum as research in teaching English shows the same interest to direct the attention towards the importance of teaching materials in class (Nunan, 1988; Richards, 2003). Some phases of curriculum development are: *needs assessment, goals and objectives, testing, materials, teaching and program evaluation* (Richards, 2003). Therefore, curriculum development is seen as a network of interesting processes, people and objects. Curriculum development process includes: needs analysis, setting goals, objectives, preparing materials, training teachers, teaching techniques and evaluating all of the previous (Richards, 2003). Curriculum development searches for the best possible programs that fulfill learners' requirements by enhancing curriculum or changing it.

Due to the lack of attention to selection of contents, Nunan (1988) emphasizes the development of materials used in teaching English and that the use of new ones certainly affect the methodology and the type of learning activities in the classroom.

The Purpose for Using Authentic Materials

There are different reasons to use authentic materials with foreign language learners as they show effectiveness in various studies (Gilmore, 2001; Jacobson, Degener, and Purcell-Gates 2003; Tani & Yusuf, 2010). First of all, students have the opportunity to read and learn from authentic texts, meaning they read the real language that native speakers use and language learners usually prefer to be native speaker like in terms of pronunciation, accent and idioms usage. Authentic materials can link the disparity between classroom learning and realistic setting of language outside schools. Students have the chance to study the language and skills of using it as it is applied in actual settings (Tanti & Yusuf, 2010).

The second reason to use authentic material is that the syllabus of traditional teaching materials for teaching English includes different themes and language discourse, but there is no guarantee that these texts take into account numerous phrases that the learners might need to use (Cook, 1981; Crawford, 2002; Jacobson et al., 2003). These authors indicate that there is still necessity to understand more about learning and teaching English; therefore, authentic materials are used to present the students with structures or words that traditional materials might not include. Because authentic materials are written for native speakers they are good representatives of language and structure and can reduce the shortage of language in traditional materials.

The third reason for adopting authentic materials is that students can use different authentic texts to relate their learning to their future needs. For example, using job application forms in a writing class assists students to use different structures and phrases, and understand terminology used in application forms and how to fill in the necessary information (Belcher, 2006; Harmer, 2002; Jacobson et al., 2003). Another example, students who need to get their driver's license can read from a driver's handbook or students can write letters to a local office asking for information or write to a newspaper editor to complain about an issue in the community (Jacobson et al., 2003). These types of texts and activities increase the ESL students' interests in learning the language and improve their life skills outside the classroom.

The last reason for using authentic materials is that listening to real conversations like radio shows or watching TV programs are other types of authentic materials that promote learners' awareness over of the difference between real and contrived language. Students can hear a conversation between a customer and a seller and learn from the vocabulary that each person uses through the interaction. Students usually learn very formal ways of speaking in their textbooks and this is not the reality in everyday situations. Therefore, teachers can use role plays activities and help students practice the conversations they watch and hear from TV or radio shows.

For example, when I used English for the first time in England as a foreign language speaker, I asked for a bag from the seller very formally as I was taught in school. It took the seller a few seconds to understand me and he was wondering how to help me. He thought that I was looking for another thing to buy which I couldn't find in

the store and needed his help to search for it. Finally, I showed him the bag and only then he understood that I only needed a bag! The language that students listen to in class is produced to teach specific aspects of language and it is different from what is heard in actual situations; therefore, it loses its authenticity (Oura, 2003; Porter & Roberts, 1981).

The Role of Authentic Materials on the Motivation of EFL/ESL Learners

Authentic materials can be used to motivate students because students can use real items that include real language which is used in the real world. Motivation is defined as, “an interest and an enthusiasm for the materials used in class; persistence with the learning task, as indicated by levels of attention or action for an extended duration; and level of concentration and enjoyment” (Peacock, 1997, p. 145). Authentic materials are great tools for students’ participation and they engage students with different materials to work on when teachers select what is appropriate for their levels and culture (Alomari, 2009). When students are motivated, it reduces anxiety and increases their involvement in class activities. Moreover, students’ success in understanding authentic materials develops their confidence and autonomy as readers.

Research shows significant motivation in students when they use authentic materials (Berardo, 2006; Cook, 1981). When authentic texts used for a reading class with advanced English as foreign language students, the students found authentic materials that the teacher selected engaging and more up-to-date than textbooks (Berardo, 2006). Students were very motivated during the reading activities and this motivation was reflected in their comprehension which encouraged them to read more. Another study was conducted by Tra (n.d.) at a Vietnamese university on students who were second

year English majors. The study aimed to test if students' motivation was enhanced by using authentic materials. The experiment used non-authentic and authentic materials of the same topics and tasks. Students were observed during the tasks and their performances were compared. Students answered a questionnaire to reveal which contents they were more interested in. The results of the study showed that the use of authentic materials is one technique that increases the students' motivation, specifically in speaking class and generally in learning English.

Furthermore, students feel excited to use materials that are relevant to their daily lives and these materials are more applicable to students who desire to visit a foreign country (Cook, 1981; Harmer, 2002; Jacobson et al., 2003). If these students want to perform appropriately in the foreign community they have to get familiar with the authentic readings they study in class because it helps them to use the language and associate with the new language in social contexts (Cook, 1981).

The Effect of Authentic Materials on the Cultural Awareness of ESL/EFL Learners

Students can use authentic materials such as restaurant menus, train or plane tickets, images of a foreign country, films of special occasions like Christmas, or audio tapes of a dialogue between a customer and a bank employee. These students seem to raise their cultural awareness of the country and the language they are studying. These kinds of materials and the relevant activities usually attract the students and engage them in learning (Cook, 1981; Jacobson et al., 2003; Nunan, 2000). They also raise their curiosity to learn more about a specific aspect of the culture they are interested in;

searching the internet or other accessible sources. Learners need to learn about the culture to recognize meanings and learn the language successfully (Kilickaya, 2004).

In addition, authentic materials content can include attractive topics such as popular cultural topics for second language learners like international holidays, sightseeing or events. These kinds of cultural topics motivate the students and can be used to raise questions and draw students' attention to learning new words and concepts (Kelly et al., 2002). Authentic materials like newspapers or magazine articles usually mention themes such as Christmas, Thanksgiving, Halloween and these cultural topics can raise the students' interest to ask and answer questions that bring dynamic conversations into a class. By using these cultural topics, students at the primary levels of learning English can answer with one word or written phrases. They can also choose one entry for answering individual questions and engage in dynamic group discussion.

Improving classroom interaction is another outcome of using authentic materials in raising the cultural awareness of English language learners. ESL learners need to work cooperatively with the authentic materials and practice the language content actively through tasks. For example, playing a song for students is effective to interact and motivate students at the start of a lesson, but it doesn't present the culture meaningfully to the students (Bilash Bio, 2011). For the song to be beneficial and interactive there should be relevant tasks that can be used, such as, discussion to engage students in intensive comprehension of the foreign culture. Authentic materials, such as pictures or videos can be used easily by students to discuss how the foreign culture is portrayed and how it is different from their own culture. These materials lead to motivation and interaction

between students and teachers and enhance the learners' attitude as a center of the learning process.

Summary

In this chapter, the literature review presents some of the traditional and current situations in using teaching materials for English language learners. It also includes research and the theorists that support developing teaching materials and using authentic materials to enhance teaching and learning for English language learners.

Current teaching materials used for teaching English as a second language have some issues that reduce their effectiveness to improve the students' learning English. Some of these issues are the simplicity of teaching texts and the large extent of emphasis on grammar teaching. The focus on teaching reading and writing goes beyond the teaching of conversational skills that the second language learners usually need to be able to use and communicate the language in actual life settings. Although ESL teaching materials lack necessary components for ESL learners, they work well for beginner students in elementary level of learning the English language. They provide them with essential grammar and simple themes to start with. These materials are also convenient for the teachers as they find ready teaching objectives and the tasks that function for each objective.

Equally important, the theories of language teaching have different claims for using teaching materials. Some of these theories are the linguistic theories and the behaviourists' that emphasize teaching grammar drills and rules of the language structure.

The constructivists view language learning as a process of social interaction to practice language as it processed in real life.

Together with theories, different approaches of teaching English as a second language are discussed and these include the grammar translation approach, the communicative approach, the situational approach, and the social theory. Some of these theories consider the emphasis on teaching the structure of the language while others emphasize the interaction between learners and the practice of new language and the experience in the class of what they learn.

Additionally, First language acquisition is discussed and some views present how it is different from second language learning in several ways. The difference of the age of the second language learner and the situation of language input are different from that of the first language learner. First language learners acquire the language without much effort while the second language learners need longer time and teaching instructions of the rules of the language.

The key point of this literature review is to explain that authentic materials are recently viewed as effective teaching materials due to their role in teaching English language learners. These materials help learners understand and use the forms of the language as it is used by native speakers. Using authentic materials assist the learners to communicate real life activities that they face in everyday situations. Definitions of authentic materials vary, but most of them share the concept of the materials that are not produced for the purpose of learning, but are produced for native speakers.

As a matter of fact, there are numerous reasons for using authentic materials in teaching English as a second language. Learners usually prefer to study the language that the native speakers use to practice real language. In addition, authentic materials include varieties of language vocabulary that might not be included in traditional teaching materials. Students also prefer to use materials that help them in future needs such as filling job applications or reading a booklet of instructions.

In like manner, authentic materials can promote students motivation and cultural awareness as they use real language items. They interact actively in classroom activities and enhance their confidence as readers and writers. The cultural topics attract and motivate students because these topics broaden their knowledge about different cultures. They engage students in learning the language in interesting contexts.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to examine the nature, the extent, and the use of authentic materials that are used in reading classes at the ESL Center at Kent State University. Moreover, the study aims to explore the instructors' and students' insights and perceptions towards using the authentic materials in reading to learn English. The study requires different types of data collection; this chapter includes description of the participants and the methods that are used to carry out the study. There is also a description of the data collection and data analyses instruments that are needed for the investigation.

Research Questions

The research questions of this study:

1. What is the nature, extent and the use of authentic materials in learning English as a second language at the ESL Center at Kent State University?
2. What are the insights and perceptions of ESL instructors about the authentic materials in reading at the ESL Center?
3. What are the ESL students' insights and perceptions of using authentic materials in reading at the ESL Center?

Theoretical Framework

The communicative approach is the theoretical framework that informs this study. The communicative approach focuses on teaching through interactions to understand meanings and get feedback to develop learners' communicative abilities to use the

foreign language (Richar, 2006; Savignon, 1997; Widdowson, 1987). It was argued that learners learn a language through the process of communicating it, and that communication that is meaningful to the learner provides a better opportunity for learning than learning through a grammar-based approach (Richards, 2006).

The communicative approach in teaching English as a foreign language is consistent with constructivist theories in using authentic learning environments. In constructivist learning environments, students should interact with authentic activities and materials representing real life; they provide the students with real life experiences (Oguz & Bahar, 2008). The learning environment includes authentic materials and activities in class that are similar in real life situations. Students learn new knowledge with authentic texts such as magazines, postcards or kinds of authentic tasks such as role plays, simulation or listening to authentic dialogues. Students practice how to use these materials in class to enhance their reading skills and communication as these form basic goals for teaching the English language.

The communicative approach encourages using authentic materials from real life materials in the classroom (Clarke & Silberstein, 1977; Richards, 2006; Widdowson, 1987). These materials could consist of magazines, newspapers, signs, and other visual aids that can be used like maps graphs and charts. In the communicative language teaching, the focus changed to presenting the language as close to real use with the assumption that students would understand patterns from them without direct instruction (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004).

Research Design

By conducting focus groups with ESL instructors and a survey with students at the ESL Center at Kent State University, the researcher seeks a better understanding of the experience of the ESL instructors and the students in using the authentic materials in teaching and learning. The purpose of this study is to examine the authentic materials that are used in reading classes in the ESL Center at Kent State University. Moreover, the study aims to explore the instructors' and students' insights and perceptions towards using the authentic materials in reading to learn English. Approval is obtained from the administration and the instructors of reading classes to conduct the study, meet the reading instructors in focus groups and use a survey with the students who are in intermediate and advanced reading classes at the ESL Center. The instructors and the students are introduced to the study and its purpose to be familiar with the research process.

Setting and Participants

There are currently 583 students registered in the ESL Center, 79 instructors (for all subjects), 36 of them being reading instructors. The participants in this study are seven ESL instructors and 74 male and female students in the ESL Center at Kent State University in Ohio. The ESL Center offers English language classes of different levels of proficiency. The students at the ESL Center are from different nationalities and they study English to pursue their academic studies or for other professional development. The participants are four groups of the intermediate level (five and six) and four groups of the advanced level (seven through ten). These students are learning English as a second

language as full time students. The reason for choosing these levels is that the primary investigations on the texts that they study include some authentic materials. Therefore, there is an assumption that they have had practical experience using these texts and their responses could contribute to the study.

Students. The students are international students; some are Japanese speakers, others are Chinese and Arabic speakers. Students learned English as a foreign language in their countries before they enrolled in the ESL Center, but the years of studying English vary from one nationality to another, usually from six to 12 years of studying general English at home prior to coming to the USA. Some of these students will begin their undergraduate studies and others will pursue their graduate studies in different majors.

These participants are selected because the primary investigations on the reading texts they study include some authentic materials. The students' age ranged from 18-30 years old, as it is found from the ESL Coordinator, and they are studying English to further pursue their academic study in the United States. Their level ranges from intermediate to advanced level in English proficiency. Students sign the consent before they answered it electronically. Students are informed that they have the right to withdraw from the research any time they feel uncomfortable to participate in the research.

Instructors. By conducting focus groups, seven instructors are selected according to their willingness to take part and answer the researcher questions. The researcher meets them first during their regular meetings as reading instructors with their skill leader. The researcher introduces the study and arranges the time to meet for the focus

groups. The instructors are contacted before the focus group meeting by emails to remind them about the date, time and the location. The focus group method is chosen to provide the researcher a deeper understanding of instructors' insights and perceptions in using authentic materials in reading. All of the instructors are American and they all hold Master degrees with teaching experience ranging from two to 12 years in teaching English as a second language.

The instructors who participate in the study teach the reading classes of the assigned levels listed above (the intermediate and the advanced level). These instructors are chosen because they are teaching reading; therefore, they provide information from their actual experience at the time of the study. In addition, these instructors are teaching the same students who participate in the study. Thus, the researcher can view the entire picture from instructors, students and analyzing the reading textbooks that are used in teaching reading regarding using authentic materials.

Data Collection

The researcher starts with having the IRB approval from the administration to meet instructors and survey the students. The students are also introduced by emails and by their instructors to the study and its purpose to be familiar with the research methods of survey.

Data Sources

Text analysis of the reading textbooks that are used in teaching reading is one way to collect the data. The second source for the data collection is meeting instructors as focus groups. The last source of data is a survey for the students.

Text analysis. The analysis includes five reading textbooks used to teach the students in all levels of proficiency starting from the beginner level to the advanced level at the ESL Center. The textbooks are examined for using authentic texts within them, to what extent the authentic texts are used and in what way they are used. For example, there may be newspaper articles, brochures or application forms in chapters. These are pointed out and also checked for frequency of occurrence. Number of categories is used to analyze the textbooks and each book is checked for different characterizations. First, the title of the book, the author and the level of language proficiency is identified. Next, the chapter and page number that the authentic text occurs in is assigned. Then, the genre of the authentic text and its sources are appointed and described. The last characterizations are for the instructional function of the authentic text and any other functional language it may provide. The list of reading textbooks is provided in Appendix D.

Printed Authentic materials could include a variety of forms such as menus, posters, announcements, maps, brochures, restaurant menus, posters, announcements, tickets, newspaper articles, and magazine articles.

The reading books are checked for authentic texts according to the definition that adopted by the researcher; authentic materials “use examples of language produced by native speakers for some real purpose of their own rather than using language produced and designed solely for the classroom” (Cook, 1981, p.1). Following this analysis, the degree to which each text contains authentic materials is described along with comments and insights about the selections.

Focus group. Qualitative researchers conducting a basic interpretive study are interested in “how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their experiences and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam, 2002, p. 38). The focus group is the qualitative research method that is used to answer the questions for instructors of this study. Focus groups correspond with the research questions because they deal with the experiences of individuals from their own perspectives. Focus groups are “particularly suited to be used when the objective is to understand better how people consider an experience, idea, or event, because the discussion in the FG meetings is effective in supplying information about what people think, or how they feel, or on the way they act” (Freitas et al., 1998, p.3).

The researcher meets the instructors for 30 minutes in their Reading class which is conducted every other week during the semester. The researcher introduces herself in order to make the participants comfortable with the topic. All of the instructors work in the same ESL Center and all of them teach reading. Accordingly, all of the instructors know each other which makes discussion on the topic relevant and more comfortable.

The researcher also discusses the study and its purpose and answers any questions the instructors might have. The time and location are discussed to ensure availability of the instructor and confirmation is sent by email two days before the assigned date. There are two focus groups that meet in a small, quiet library at the ESL Center and each focus group meeting lasts approximately 45 minutes. There are four instructors at the first focus group and three additional instructors in the second focus group. The time and location of the meetings are confirmed by email. The instructors

are selected according to willingness to participate. They are informed that the discussions are to be audio taped for the purpose of analysing the data; therefore, they are given consent forms to sign to participate in the study and to be audio taped. Besides, they are informed that the recording is discarded at the end of the study. The instructors are given anonymous identification to provide them confidentiality.

The questions for the focus group are preceded by the instructors' definition of authentic materials to ensure their understanding. The questions then seek their insights and perceptions in using authentic materials in reading classes; their criteria of choosing authentic materials; the proper tasks they use with authentic materials to improve the learners' reading and if they face any difficulties to include authentic materials in reading classes (Appendix B). The focus groups of instructors provide the researcher with their insights and perceptions towards the use of authentic materials.

Survey. The quantitative part in this study is using the survey for the ESL students. By using a survey for students in the ESL Center, the researcher seeks better understanding of ESL students' perceptions in using the authentic materials in learning. The purpose is to get insightful perspectives of students' relations to authentic materials.

The survey includes an introduction explaining the meaning of authentic materials. In the first section, the demographic data are collected. It includes their nationalities, length of time learning English, their level of English proficiency, their ages and gender. The survey includes a series of closed-ended questions and few open ended questions. Some of these questions are dichotomous questions; some are multiple choice questions and few scale-rating questions that measured the frequency of using authentic

materials. Using open-ended questions on the last part provided examples of the authentic materials students prefer to use and to write any further comments. The purpose from these questions is to elicit students' degree of willingness and their beliefs concerning reading texts and authentic materials (Appendix A).

A pre-test pilot of the survey is used with 10 students who are selected randomly from the ESL Center. These students do not participate in the actual study. The purpose for testing the survey is to ensure that there are no any ambiguous questions or misleading questions. The students show some misunderstandings of some questions that are later modified to ensure the participants' comprehension.

The data was collected in the spring semester of 2013. As mentioned previously, the sources of data are the analyses of reading texts at the ESL Center, the instructors' focus group and the students' survey.

The five reading texts that are used to teach the ESL students in the ESL Center are analysed by the researcher regarding the use of authentic materials. The survey is distributed online using the *Qualtrix* software. The students receive the survey online through email and are given instructions to work on the survey.

Data Analysis

The results of this study are based on the reading textbook analyses, analyzing the instructors' focus group and the students' survey.

Data Analysis of Textbooks

Each of the five reading textbooks that are analyzed in this study is checked for different characterizations. First, the title of the book, the author and the level of

language proficiency are identified. The level of language proficiency of the books starts from beginner to advanced level. Next, the chapter and page numbers that the authentic text occurs in are assigned. Then, the genre of the authentic text and its source are appointed and described. For example, some are classified advertisements that are taken from a newspaper. The last characterizations are for the instructional function of the authentic text, frequency of authentic text occurrence and other comments. In other words, some excerpts from a dictionary are used to illustrate how to find specific parts of speech. The content of the categorization sheet provides data and presents what kind of authentic texts are used and to what extent they are used.

Data Analysis of Focus Groups

The focus groups data from the instructors are analysed qualitatively using the grounded theory. Strauss and Corbin (2008) define grounded theory as “a specific methodology developed for the purpose of building theory from data” (p.1). The primary objective of grounded theory is to expand an explanation of a phenomenon by identifying the key elements of that phenomenon, and then categorizing relations of those elements to the context and process of the experiment. Thus, the goal is to go from the general to the specific without losing prospects of the subjects.

Therefore, the discussions of the instructors are audio taped, transcribed and coded for any emerging theme. Instructors’ quotations are used according to the relevant themes. After transcribing the discussion, a summary of the content is written and includes the pseudonym of the instructors, the time, the location and how long the meeting lasts. For the discussion summary, I find the central points for answers and some

of these points are used as codes. The coded data help the researcher gain insights and generate an initial understanding that help form some themes. A peer review is conducted to obtain a second opinion on the findings.

Data Analysis of the Survey

Percentages are used to describe the quantitative data to describe the students' attitude towards authentic materials in the survey. The last section of the survey that includes open-ended questions is analysed qualitatively by coding the main themes and describing the students' preference of reading texts. The students' quotations are used to provide detailed descriptions of their answers.

The survey is given to a statistician in the Bureau of Evaluation in the School of Education at Kent State University. The statistician observes statistical results that help the researcher to describe the data and discover the students' insights and perceptions in using authentic materials.

Validity and Reliability

In order to maintain valid and reliable research in this study, the researcher conducts triangulation to collect data through a combination of document analyses, a survey, and a focus group. The focus group discussions are recorded and transcribed; quotes are used to establish reliability; and member check is used with the participants for the same purpose. The data are included in the final report to confirm that the conclusion is drawn from the interpreted data. Professional colleagues are asked to revise the research process to critique and ensure accuracy of information.

Ethics

The IRB approval is obtained before conducting the data collection. After IRB approval of the instruments, the participants are given consent forms to sign and there is no risk of their participation in the study. The focus group discussions are conducted after class so instructors are not losing any teaching time. The students are free to pursue or withdraw from the study at any time. The survey and the focus groups data and transcripts are kept in a locked cabinet at the researcher's office and are discarded at the end of the research. All the shared information is confidential and the participants' names remain anonymous throughout the study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

In this study, the nature, the use and the extent of authentic materials are examined in reading classes at the ESL Center at Kent State University. For example, what are the amounts and types of authentic texts that are used in teaching reading? Moreover, the study explores the instructors' and students' insights and perceptions towards using the authentic materials in reading to learn English.

In this chapter, I analyse three different data sources. First, I analyze the data of the textbooks of reading at the ESL Center at Kent State University. Second, I analyze the data from the two focus group discussions of the ESL instructors who participate in this study. Last, I analyze the data of the survey of students who participate in the study at the ESL Center. The results of the data analyses are presented for this study that aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is the nature, extent and the use of authentic materials in learning English as a second language at the ESL Center at Kent State University?
2. What are the insights and perceptions of ESL instructors about using authentic materials in reading at the ESL Center?
3. What are the ESL students' insights and perceptions about using authentic materials in reading at the ESL Center?

Study Process and Data Collection

Textbooks Analysis

Five textbooks are analysed that are used in teaching reading at the ESL Center at Kent State University: (1) Hartmann & Mentel (2007) book titled *Interactions Access*, published by McGraw- Hill; (2) Hartman & Kirn, (2007) book titled *Interaction 1*, published by McGraw- Hill; (3) Hartmann & Kirn (2007) book titled *Interaction 2* , published by Mc Graw- Hill; (4) Knezevic & Wegmann (2007) book titled *Mosaic 1*, published by McGraw- Hill; (5) Langan (2008) book titled *Ten Steps to Building College Reading Skills*, published by Townsend Press (Appendix D). These textbooks are used to teach reading starting from level one, which is for beginner students, to level 10, which is for advanced students.

These textbooks provide learners with systematic development starting from pre-reading to advanced reading. Students learn and gradually develop reading and language skills as each level becomes increasingly difficult.

The five textbooks are analysed using various categories. The title of each textbook is introduced, the author, the level, the chapter and the page where the authentic/inauthentic text is found, the genre of the authentic/inauthentic text, the source of the authentic/inauthentic text, and the functional language of the authentic/inauthentic text (Appendix D).

The aim of using categories is to help the researcher to locate every authentic text that is used in each textbook. Then, the numbers of these authentic texts are calculated in each textbook in order to identify how many authentic texts each textbook uses as reading

texts. The analysis reveals the following data that describe each textbook: each textbook is used to teach two levels; the first half of each textbook is used to teach one level and the second half is used to teach the following level. The following are tables and analyses of each textbook.

Level one and two students study from the textbook *Interaction Access* (Hartmann & Mentel, 2007) (Table 1). Marginalia is used at the beginning of each chapter in the book to introduce the students to the topic and for brainstorming. Marginalia means “notes in the margin or margins of a book” (The Free Dictionary). All of the marginalia are written by native speakers of English from different periods of time, excluding one, written by a Dutch writer. The articles used in this textbook seem to be authentic, but they are not cited. The article is defined as “an essay or prose composition of nonfiction material” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p.19). There are other four articles that the authors state that are taken from internet websites, yet there is no clear citation for these articles at the reference page of the textbook. The articles are one page long (some are shorter), but they include some challenging vocabulary for level one and two students. In these four articles, students have to read for comprehension and understand the main ideas. They learn new vocabulary, make inferences and make connections among ideas as well. Furthermore, students study new grammatical structure from these articles such as words of high frequency, parts of speech and using “that” to connect sentences. Overall, *Interaction Access* has the fewest authentic texts comparing to the number of the whole texts it includes.

Table 1

The Authentic/Inauthentic Materials in Interaction Access

Textbook Title	Author	Level	Number of authentic/cited materials in the textbook	Authentic/ cited text genre	Function Of the authentic/ Cited Text	Number of inauthentic/uncited materials in the textbook	inauthentic/ uncited text genre	Function of the inauthentic/ncited Text
<i>Interaction Access: Reading Silver edition.</i>	Hartman & Mentel	1&2	N=10 Cited=0 Uncited=37	*Marginalia=10	Brainstorming	N=27 Uncited=27	*Articles= 11	*Reading Practice, prediction, understanding main ideas, building vocabulary, inference practice.
							Narrative=2	*Making inference, finding details
							Questionnaire=2	* Building vocabulary
							Cartoons=4	*Understanding humor, thinking critically
							Blogs=1	*Reading comprehension, Building vocabulary
							Essay =2	* Identifying main ideas, Building vocabulary
							maps=3	*Reading a map
							Tour brochures =1	*making connections, building vocabulary

In levels three and four, students use *Interaction 1* (Hartmann & Kirn, 2007). Searching for the authentic materials in this textbook, the researcher only finds a few short, authentic texts. Most of these texts are marginalia written by different authors and they are used only for pre-reading activities. These marginalia are used to prepare the students for the general topic of the lesson. They tend to help the students to predict what they will read in the next few pages where they will have the main reading text of the chapter. There are only few stories – a story being defined as “an imaginative tale shorter than a novel, but with plot, characters, and settings, as a short story” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 243). One of the stories is written by one of the same authors of the textbook. The authors’ goal of using the first story is to make students practice inferences and express points of view. The other story consists of different plots that describe events of real movies or TV shows; however, there is no specific citation for these short plots. These short plots, about half a page each, are used for critical thinking activities. Students need to classify types of stories and learn how to summarize them. For the functional language of these stories, students learn outlining, recognizing supporting details and putting events in order.

In addition, this textbook uses sixteen articles and other online articles, but there is not any citation information for these articles. The author only indicates that the textbook includes some articles and other website articles. The researcher tries to find them online, but cannot. Thus, it is hard to consider these texts as authentic (Table 2).

Interaction 2 (Hartmann & Kirn, 2007) is the textbook that is used for levels five and six. There are not many authentic texts in this textbook, either. Most of the authentic

Table 2

Authentic/Inauthentic Texts in Interaction 1

Textbook Title	Author	Level	Number of authentic materials in the textbook	Authentic text genre	Function Of the authentic Text	Number of inauthentic / uncited materials in the textbook	Inauthentic / uncited text genre	Function Of the inauthentic/ uncited Text
<i>Interaction 1: Reading.</i> Silver edition	Hartman & Kirn	3&4	N=8 Cited= 8	Marginalia = 8	*Pre-reading activity	N=24 Uncited=22	*short story= 2	* Reading & Inference practice.
							*Article= 16	*Identifying cause and effect, Recognizing supporting details, paraphrasing
							*Online article=3	*understanding the point, opinions
							*Personal ads=1	* Figuring out vocabulary

texts are marginalia. There are ten of them, one in each chapter, used as pre-reading activity to introduce the topic of the chapter. Dictionary excerpts are also another source of authentic texts in this textbook which are appropriately cited. There are only two quotations by a novelist and a poet used meaningfully for reading practice and paraphrasing tasks. Students are required to state the quotes in their own words and then use these quotes for discussing a social aspect. The quotes are also used to understand their inference and making a statement of its meaning.

In this textbook, *Interaction 2*, there is just one article that has a clear citation. It is adopted from the *Christian Science Monitor* (1995). The article is about one page long and is used for reading practice. The reading article is used for comprehension, skimming for main ideas, and understanding meaning from the context without understanding every single word.

The same textbook includes one classified advertisement, within a reading text, that is not credited. An advertisement indicates “any public notice, as a printed display in a newspaper, short film on television, announcement on radio, etc., designed to sell goods, publicize an event, etc.” (Dictionary.com). The advertisement includes job offers, cars and homes for sale. They are used for reading practice and learning how to skim for the main ideas (see Table 3).

Mosaic 1 (Knzevic & Wegman, 2007) is the textbook used for level seven and eight at the ESL Center for teaching reading. In contrast to the other reading textbooks, *Mosaic 1* includes various authentic texts such as: (a) Poetry which is defined as “the art of creating poems” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 189) ; (b) Comic strips which are defined

Table 3

Authentic/Inauthentic Texts in Interaction 2

Textbook Title	Author	Level	Number of authentic/Cited materials in the textbook	Authentic/cited text genre	Function Of the authentic /cited Text	Number of inauthentic/uncited materials in the textbook	inauthentic/uncited text genre	Function Of the inauthentic /uncited Text
<i>Interaction 2: Reading.</i> Silver edition	Hartmann & Kirn	5&6	N= 11	*Marginalia =6	*Pre-reading activity	N=25 Uncited=25	Classified ads =1	Skimming for a topic
				*Dictionary expert =4	* Find part of speech, understanding connotation		Article= 19	Getting meaning from context, skimming for main ideas
				* Website article=1	Reading comprehension		Quotations=2	Paraphrasing
							Maps=2	Pre-reading activity
							Newspaper ads=1	Reading announcements
							Online article=1	Understanding main ideas, getting meaning from context

as “a sequence of drawings and dialogues, usually appearing in newspapers, that tell an amusing incident or story” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 36); (c) Journal articles which are defined as “a periodical published by a learned society, association, institution, etc.” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p.126); (d) Passages from a textbook which are defined as “a book used for instructional purposes, especially in schools and colleges” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 255); (e) A narrative which is defined as “in general, a story, actual or fictional, expressed orally or in written” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p.162); (f) Short stories and a story which are defined as “a brief fictional prose narrative designed to create a unified impression quickly and forcefully” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 243). *Mosaic 1* includes other genres, such as: (g) excerpts from books; an excerpt means “to take or publish extracts from (as a book)” (Merriam Webster); (h) Autobiography which means “an account of a person’s life written or otherwise recorded by that person” (Dictionary.com); (i) Charts that stand for “a sheet exhibiting information in tabular form” (Dictionary.com). This textbook also includes many marginalia and some online articles.

Marginalia exists at the beginning of each chapter – this means ten of them in the whole textbook, one for each chapter. Each one is written by different author, two are written by English native speakers and the others are translated from other languages. They all have the same purpose. They are used to introduce the topic of the chapter and prepare the students to predict ideas and use their background knowledge.

Articles are frequently used in *Mosaic 1*, yet they are of different styles. Some are taken from online sources; others are magazine or journal articles. They are all used

for reading practice, but for several functional purposes as well. Some of these articles are used to teach students how to scan the context to find the main and implied ideas and specific statements. The articles are also used to teach students how to paraphrase main ideas, recognize synonyms, and create discussions. In addition, these articles are used to teach students to analyse the pattern of organization of the article and the thesis of the article. Other functions of the articles are to help students learn vocabulary from the context and understand compound words. Identifying the voice in reading and the points of comparison are other functions for using articles in the textbook. Besides, students learn to report opinions and understand meaning of specialized terms from context.

Excerpts from textbooks are also used in *Mosaic 1*. There are three texts that are taken from different textbooks. They are all used for reading practice, but for different language functions. These texts aim to teach different reading skills such as: finding implied ideas, distinguishing between facts and opinions, skimming and scanning for development of ideas, and finding sequence of events. Some of the functional language that the excerpts are used for is learning prefixes and suffixes, learning new vocabulary and getting the meaning of words from context.

Stories are other components of the reading selections in *Mosaic 1*. An autobiography is one type that functions to teach students to find sequences of events in a story in order to understand the whole story, then the autobiography is used for bringing up discussions and finding some concluding notes. A narrative is an additional text type that is used for identifying the setting, characters, and conflict. Students learn about predicting events, and using timelines to recall the series of events in a plot. For

language skills, students learn to find meaning from the context and understand world families. One fictitious, short story, is used for skimming and scanning, and finding support for main ideas. Besides, it is used for reviewing characters and plot, expressing the theme and making inferences about characters. Students use prefixes to build new vocabulary and scan for words with clues and understand meaning from the context. One detective story, a short story, is presented in *Mosaic 1*. The students understand the setting, identify narrative elements, scan, and read to interpret a scene from a plot. They use a summary of an event to personalize their viewpoint. For the language part, they infer meaning from the context, match descriptive adverbs to their context and identify spelling variations (see Table 4).

Ten Steps to Improve College Reading Skills (Langan, 2008) is the textbook that the students in levels nine and ten study for reading skills. This textbook is written for any college student who needs to improve reading and critical thinking skills. The book includes 45 authentic texts that are of different genres. There are stories, articles, textbook excerpts, narratives, comics and essays. An essay is defined as “a relatively brief literary composition, usually in prose, giving the author’s views on a particular topic” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 75). Although these authentic texts are derived from different genres, they are all used for a general instructional function which is reading practice. For the functional language, they share similar purposes: to teach students reading and language skills. There is an emphasis on learning new vocabulary using the contexts and clues for guessing meaning in each authentic text. Students gain knowledge of locating the main and implied ideas and understanding the supporting details of the topic. In addition, they study how

Table 4

Authentic/Inauthentic Texts in Mosaic 1

Textbook Title	Author	Level	Number of authentic materials in the textbook	Authentic text genre	Function Of the authentic Text	Number of inauthentic/uncited materials in the textbook	inauthentic /uncited text genre	Function Of the inauthentic/uncited Text
<i>Mosaic 1: Reading. Silver edition</i>	Wegmann & Knezevic	7&8	N= 35 Cited= 35	*Marginalia(Quotations) =2	*Pre-reading activity	N=8	Marginalia	Pre-reading activity
				*Poetry=3	*Paraphrasing, discussion			
				*Book excerpts= 3	*Finding main and implied ideas			
				*magazine articles= 4	*understanding metaphors, Finding the voice in a reading			
				*Online articles =2	*Inference, Comparison			
				* articles= 5	* Skimming, Vocabulary building			
				*Charts= 5	* Reading for specific information			
				*Comic strips= 3	* Supporting selected reading ideas			
				* short stories=2	* Scanning, skimming , inference understanding the setting and the plot			
				*Autobiography= 1	* Understanding meaning from context, Finding sequence of events * Comparison,			
				* Online Biography=1	Vocabulary building			
				*Textbooks passages =1 * Personal add=2	*Skimming, scanning, finding support for main ideas			
				* Narrative= 1	* Prediction, understanding the plot.			

to find the purpose and the tone of the text and the pattern of organization of the text. They learn outlining, mapping and summarizing the text. Critical thinking is another feature the students learn while working with these texts. They have to understand the argument and make inferences about what they have read. Furthermore, they need to discuss and summarize the text to prove comprehension and enhance their reading skills. On the other hand, there are many other inauthentic/uncited texts in this textbook as textbook passages, textbook paragraphs and some comic strips. These reading texts are used for critical thinking, discussion, presenting contrasting arguments, inference learning, understanding vocabulary from context, and finding the main ideas of a reading text (see Table 5).

Summary. As previously stated, five textbooks used in teaching reading at the ESL Center at Kent State University are analysed. One table is used to present the analysis for each textbook and each table includes the title of the book, the author, the level, the authentic and inauthentic materials, and the instructional functions of these materials. Regarding the use of authentic texts in these five textbooks, there are not so many authentic materials in most of the textbooks. On one hand, in the first three textbooks, *Interaction Access* (Hartmann & Mentel, 2007); *Interaction 1* (Hartmann & Kirn, 2007); *Interaction 2* (Hartmann & Kirn, 2007); most of the authentic materials in these textbooks are marginalia that are presented at the beginning of each chapter. Other than that, there are some articles and few stories and many of them are not cited or accredited by the authors. On the other hand, there are varieties of authentic texts that are used in the fourth textbook, *Mosaic 1* (Knzevic & Wegman, 2007), and all of them are

Table 5

Authentic/Inauthentic Materials in Ten Steps to Building College Reading Skills

Textbook Title	Author	Level	Number of authentic materials in the textbook	Authentic text genre	Function Of the authentic Text	Number of inauthentic /uncited materials	Inauthentic/uncited text genre	Function Of the in authentic /uncited Text
<i>Ten Steps to Building College Reading Skills</i> .5th edition	Langan	9&10	N=45 Cited=45	*Newspaper story= 1	*Inference, argument, critical reading	N=97 Uncited=97	*Cartoons= 3	*Critical thinking, presenting contrasting
				*Magazine Story= 1	* Building vocabulary, inference, purpose & tone		*College textbook passages= 44	* argument, critical reading, inference
				*Narrative=7	Building vocabulary, main implied ideas, supporting details. Inference, discussion, argument		*Textbook paragraph= 50	*Learning vocabulary from context, Finding main ideas, discussion
				*Humour excerpt=1	*Purpose and tone.			
				*Psychology textbook excerpt=1	* outlining, critical thinking			
				*Informational article=6	*Discussion, Learning vocabulary from context, Finding main ideas, purpose and tone, Summarizing			
				*Journal article=1	* Vocabulary building, argument, critical thinking			
				*Literacy essay =1	*Supporting details, purpose and tone, transition			
				*Autobiography=2	* Inference, critical thinking, outlining			
				*Essay= 3	*Understanding implied ideas, critical reading, mapping			
				*Cartoons= 21	* Comparison, show illustration, vocabulary, presenting figure of speech.			

cited. They include journal and magazine articles, narrative essays, short stories, and autobiographies. The last textbook, *Ten Steps to Improve College Reading Skills* (Langan, 2008), has some authentic/cited reading texts as short stories, comic strips, and magazine and journal articles. In addition, the textbook includes some passages and essays, but few of them are cited.

As mentioned, some of the reading textbooks include authentic materials and only one textbook, *Mosaic I*, includes a wide range of them. Some authentic materials are presented exclusively in some textbooks such as: magazine articles, website articles, newspaper articles, stories, and marginalia, however, there was lack of authentic materials that students need to function in daily life circumstances. ESL students need to read materials that assist them in communicating and interacting with the foreign culture. They need to understand how to read announcements, timetables, and tickets because they need to be prepared for communication and to function in a target language society with the least amount of issues by simply training the students to use these types of materials. These findings are further discussed in chapter 5.

Focus Group

A focus group is one of the data sources used in this research for collecting data. The participants are all instructors who teach at the ESL Center at Kent State University, and all of them teach reading classes as well as other skill classes. Some of these instructors are part-time; therefore, they teach at other universities as well and have morning classes at one university and afternoon classes at another. For this reason, it is hard to meet all of them at once.

The first group that consists of four instructors has met at the beginning of the spring semester in 2013, and the second group which consists of three instructors has met at the beginning of summer module one in 2013. There is only one meeting with each group; the duration of the first meeting is about 45 minutes, while the second has taken about 40 minutes. A total of seven instructors participate in the focus groups

Table 6

Information about the Instructors

Teacher's name	Age	Male/ Female	Years of teaching experience	Focus of Teaching Skills
Brittany	50-55	F	25	Reading/ writing/Speaking
Katie	40-45	F	3	Reading/ Writing/Speaking
Allen	20-25	M	3	Reading/ Speaking/ Writing/Grammar
Sandra	40-45	F	4	Reading/ Writing/ Speaking
John	20-25	M	1	Reading/ Grammar
Karen	25-30	F	4	Reading/ Writing/Speaking/ Listening/American Culture/ College Writing
Tania	30-35	F	2	Reading/Writing

Focus groups are helpful in this study because it allows a greater degree of flexibility to the researcher who can respond to participants' answers with more appropriate follow-up questions. "The main questions help you make sure you are answering your research puzzle; the follow-up questions and probes ensure that you get

depth, detail, vividness, richness, and nuance” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 129). The questions of the focus group provide me with the data I need to explore the participants’ points of view. I pose five questions regarding the participants’ experiences and their opinions of using authentic materials in reading:

1. What are some of the best kinds of texts to use in English teaching?
2. What are your experiences with using authentic texts in EFL/ESL teaching?
3. How best can authentic texts be used in English teaching?
4. What are some of the issues with using authentic texts in English teaching?
5. Is there anything else you would like to say about the use of authentic texts in the teaching of English?

All the participants are identified with pseudonyms: Allen, Brittany, John, Katie, Karen, Sandra and Tania (see Table 6). I spend about 45 minutes with each group and we meet at a quiet meeting room in Satterfield Hall, one of Kent State University’s buildings. During the focus group process, some participants do not have a clear idea about the meaning of authentic texts and I give them some examples to be clear of what we are talking about. By talking more and giving details about the topic, it is easier for the participants to share their opinions, thus allowing the researcher to get more information. In addition, I repeat and paraphrase some questions during the focus group meeting, but some of the instructors provide me with different answers to the same questions.

I record field notes during the Focus Group meetings that assist in my understanding of the main points of the instructors’ approaches regarding the use of authentic materials in reading. Emerson, Frets & Shaw (1995) emphasise that “field

notes provide a distinctive resource for preserving experience close to the moment of occurrence and for deepening reflection upon and understanding of those experiences” (p.13). During the process of the focus group, an audio tape recording and note-writings are used. I use three instruments for recording in the event in case any of them does not record properly or save the data. I use a tape recorder, my laptop and my iPad to record during the focus groups. I use the iPad recording to transcribe the conversation because it has the clearest sound.

Protocol of analysing focus group data. The bureau of research at Kent State University (College of EHHS) helps me to transcribe the data of the two focus groups. The first focus group meeting transcript includes 6,397 words and the second one includes 4,951 words. I arrange a set of procedures to analyze the data as follows:

A data analysis protocol is used to analyze the data. The first step of the protocol is to spend some time reading and writing some notes after receiving the transcript of the first and the second focus groups. I also write a summary of the contents and it includes the pseudonym of the instructors, the time, location and how long the focus groups meetings last. The summary includes the central points of the discussion. I begin to read the data as soon as I get it from the research bureau and it takes me many times of reading to get a general idea of the instructors’ discussion about their use of authentic materials. I try primarily to build an understanding of the data from the first round and get a feel for the data as a whole. To develop profiles, I put the transcription of the meeting and check the tape recording again to ensure whether there are any missing information or not. As Rubin and Rubin explain, “you analyze your project interviews

while the project is underway to look for core concepts and themes” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 55).

The second step of the protocol is reading the data again looking for possible specific categories such as positive or negative points about using authentic materials in reading. I start writing notes on the margin of the transcript of the first focus group meeting, and then the second one. I use the same questions for both groups; therefore, there are many similar instructors’ concepts that occur in both group discussions.

As the third step of the protocol analysis, I highlight some sentences that can be transformed into concepts or categories and start coding. I use color coding directly on the transcript for the sub-topics. For instance, all of the information referring to resources of authentic materials is marked in yellow. All types of authentic materials that the instructors use are coded in blue. Then, I use these concepts to compare and find any kind of relationship between them.

The last step of analysing the focus group protocol is to develop the categories and research any recurring patterns that the instructors are repeating during the discussion. At this stage, I include examples from the instructors’ opinions as evidence of their beliefs in using authentic materials in reading classes. The use of data extracts can “describe the social world studied so vividly that the reader, like the researcher, can almost literally see and hear its people” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 228).

Using the protocol. The first reading of the focus group data shows that the instructors use some authentic materials within the textbooks they use. Some of the textbooks for reading include articles from newspapers and magazines. In addition to the

textbooks, the instructors mention using stories, poetry, children's and adults literature texts, songs, lyrics, newspapers, ads, coupons, and other documents such as application forms and blogs as supplementing authentic materials to use for reading. The instructors also indicate that they believe in using authentic materials to improve the students' critical thinking and vocabulary. On the other hand, they mention some issues of using them like time issues, cultural sensitivity and students' needs.

The second step of analysing the focus group data is to write notes on the margin. Some of these notes are the types of authentic materials that the instructors use. Others are the instructors' points of view of the ESL textbooks used in reading courses. There is also a discussion of sources of authentic materials that the instructors use and some reading skills that they believe are enhanced by using authentic materials. Some suggestions are proposed by the instructors to create better use of authentic materials in the ESL classes.

The third step of analysing the focus group data includes highlighting sentences. I look first for key words and then sentences that are repeated frequently in the transcripts. I have many highlighted phrases and sentences that help me to form a general picture of the discussion; for example, instructors emphasize the use of stories and this is repeated along the transcript. Some of the instructors like literature in general while others specify poetry and lyrics in specific. These highlighted phrases and sentences lead to outlines for more specific categories.

The last step of analysing the focus group data is to develop categories and include some evidence. In the memos, reflective notes, I include some quotes and I use

these quotes then as themes for categories: “whenever a good quote catches your ear, you should include it in your memos, follow up to determine its meaning in later interviews” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p.205). I use the memos to help me for the final analysis to find relation between themes. I relate the codes to each other to get a better understanding of the data. I then use what I learn from the memos for later follow up questions. Another doctoral student analyse the focus groups data and develop categories that match the researcher’s categories. The instructors are busy to meet again for follow up questions, but are willing to participate using emails. They are also interested to recognize the research to benefit from its conclusions.

Findings of analysis of focus group. There are main categories of focus group analysis. Reading the transcripts of two focus groups discussions reflects mostly similar responses; therefore, I am able to find common categories in both transcripts (See Table 7). I list the categories below and then discuss more of the instructors’ concepts of using authentic materials.

Recognition of the nature of authentic materials that the instructors use.

The instructors, Allen, Brittany, John, Katie, Karen, Sandra and Tania, mention many sources that they use for authentic materials. Some instructors who teach reading level 8 in the ESL Center use the *Mosaic I* textbook (Wegman & Knezevic, 2007). This textbook includes many authentic articles that are related to any ESL student who will pursue their University studies. Allen, who is one of the focus group participants, searches one article of the textbook and he finds it in USA Today. “I was really sceptical

Table 7

Main Categories of Focus Group Discussion

Categories of the descriptive data	Number of times the category occurs	Number of teachers discuss the category	Examples of each category
Recognition of the nature of authentic materials that the instructors use	26	7	Application forms, Short stories, novels
Authentic materials enhance motivation	8	4	Writing a response for an authentic text motivate the students
Authentic materials enhance reading skills	27	6	Students learn skimming and scanning
Authentic materials enhances critical thinking	18	4	Students write reading response implying things about characters
Issues of using authentic materials	25	5	Level appropriateness and time issues

of using these because I wasn't sure these were ESL texts and I searched them online and I found that actually these were identical to the published articles in *USA Today*," he describe. "The articles were not modified in any way and were entirely authentic." The instructors like to bring news stories and magazine articles to focus more on critical thinking skills. They also prefer articles from Cable News Network, (CNN), The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and these are necessary for presenting various styles of texts because the textbooks focus more on "the expository story-telling out of the literature" Karen points out.

Stories are used to a great extent at the ESL Center. Some of the instructors' experience with using fictional stories is asking the students to read different stories and then write a book report for their stories. The students are "involved and engaged," Katie, another focus group participant describe, to write their summaries in class. The short stories are assigned by the instructors from a website that has quite different genres.

Using online sources is another significant source to search for authentic articles. BBC, National Public Radio (NPR), and CNN have many of these articles, but it is essential to find the articles that match the objectives of the textbook. Students should know the purpose of using the authentic articles, such as the relationship of certain readings to the others, "if it supports something else." The textbook provides scaffolding, but using authentic materials require students to "create their own scaffolding and look for words they did not know" Allen adds.

Some of the authentic non-fiction articles could be very short or could use some kind of news about research. "It is just like a little blurb, half a page or something, and that's good and valid reading as well" Karen suggests. For example, using a blog project is one type of reading activity. Students search for a blog that they are interested in, write a kind of book report, and then put their report on the blog. That is kind of digital literacy in real life use.

Using textbooks is an additional source that the instructors use as authentic materials in reading. Each Student chooses the book s/he is interested in and then s/he has to write a response for reading it. For example, one student chooses a recent book about a man who escapes North Korea. Another student chooses to read *Angels and*

Demons, written by (Brown, 2009), which is even hard for the instructor to read. Some students like to challenge themselves and choose a higher level of reading than their own (See Table 8).

Table 8 illustrates the genre and sources of authentic materials, as mentioned by the instructors, with their language function:

Table 8

Types of Authentic texts

Genre of authentic texts	Sources of authentic texts	Language functions
Articles	CNN, BBC, US Today	Enhance critical thinking
Online sources	CNN, BBC, NPR	Scaffolding, Learning vocabulary
Stories	Websites	Write a report or a summary
Textbooks	ESL Library	Write a response for a book from students' choice, improve reading comprehension

Authentic texts enhance motivation. Some of the instructors have the experience of using authentic articles from the ESL textbook that *aren't touched up* and that are entirely authentic. They thought it motivates the students because they feel proud of themselves that they read what native speakers read. Students write a response to what they read and that involves and encourages them to keep up with reading.

Additionally, the instructors mention giving online sources for the students to use and read articles from these sources. The students read articles from BBC, CNN, and NPR everyday then they write about it. One instructor thinks, "That's my kind of motivation, I kind of got put off the bait (attraction) and they all call me" Allen mentions.

He thinks that this task is beneficial and enjoyable; the students practice reading from many sources with different writing styles and get pleasure from reading them.

The instructors thought that giving authentic texts for the students to read assists them to learn not only reading skills, but also about the content of the text and “hopefully that encourages them to do some searching of authentic texts on their own, outside of class” John suggests. Reading is not solely a class duty; it should be a way to develop understanding of life for life needs.

Besides students’ motivation when they read authentic materials, there is worth of interest when students read articles from various websites that match their interests or related majors. In other words, students’ attitudes and motivation are positively correlated with the texts that are relevant to their majors. Students whose majors are in science are interested to read scientific texts while students who are interested in business like to read texts that include selling or commercial industry texts. These kinds of texts do not have to be long complicated articles, but a kind of “little blurb,” says Karen, yet they are appropriate authentic materials.

Authentic texts enhance reading skills. The instructors believe that reading authentic materials can improve students’ reading skills. Students read stories from a website that includes many American short stories. The students learn to skim and scan some of the stories and choose one they like to discuss later. They also read adult and children stories of different genres so they learn different formats of texts. “I tried stories because they are authentic and it kind of introduces them to a little bit more of a natural writing style,” Katie describes. Furthermore, the students have a chance to learn more

vocabulary and skills for understanding new vocabulary as guessing words from context. Students are engaged in the reading itself, “instead of having the reading experience be objective as the writer of the ESL textbook writer would want” says John.

The authentic articles that are in level 8 textbook includes quite advanced vocabulary and at this level they should be able to scan for vocabulary and understand the meaning from the context. Using these vocabularies open dialogues among the students and the teachers. For example, students ask about the vocabulary definition and how to use it in a sentence. When students read about one topic in several different texts, “it strengthened them, both with the concept and with the vocabulary,” Brittney adds. They spend effective time practicing and thinking about the new words.

Discussion is valuable using the authentic texts. The instructors think that discussion can be more practical, “just kind of casual discussion about the topics and sharing opinions and like what did you get from this?” Karen indicates. In other words, students read authentic texts that talk about their study majors or kind of future jobs that can captivate their thoughts and intensify their participation in class discussions.

Many skills can be practiced while students read authentic materials. Students read stories and practice how to understand characters and find the plot and themes. The instructors then assess the students using a reading response for this individual reading project (Tania, Sandra, Brittany). They write five paragraph reading responses that they do at the same level in their writing course. There is a mutual benefit in this exercise that it helps them to read well and practice writing at the same time.

Authentic texts enhance critical thinking. The instructors think that using authentic materials can develop the students' critical thinking. The textbook that the instructors use for level 10 in the ESL Center includes "direct readings" which means the texts are easy to follow and the questions are arranged to find the answers without much thinking or effort and at this level, students need to read more challenging texts that "stimulate critical thinking so much" Karen argues. Karen uses different stories of different genres and students have to read them, explain, break them down and approach them critically. The students need to read supplemental texts like magazine articles or new stories. Karen mentions that the book is reasonable in teaching the reading skills, but is not satisfied with the readings it presents. Karen thinks that the reading passages give direct information that does not help students to improve their critical thinking. Karen also thinks that the textbook does not reflect on the skills that should be learned in depth. For example, students learn how to infer or evaluate an argument while the book presents telling a story, "which they can evaluate that in such, but I think at level 10, they need to look at more academic articles," Karen concludes.

Some of the textbooks are usually structured in easy way to follow. The textbook usually has some specific objectives that the students can expect and know what the book wants them to recite later. The students follow the simple structures of the book and if they read other texts from online articles, for example, they cannot use the same procedure because, "sometimes the main idea is just line by line or a quotation in one paragraph" Allen indicates. It means that the format of authentic texts can be different from what the students usually see in their textbooks. Therefore, ESL students need to

read texts that are similar to what they would encounter in colleges. If they just use materials where everything is laid out clearly for them, they would never learn to process reading and develop their skills. Students should use the authentic materials with an authentic tasks because, “when they go to the University, no one is going to ask them what does the prefix *dis* – means,” Allen explains. Therefore, using supplementing authentic reading materials prepare the ESL students for the future skills they need in college.

Furthermore, authentic materials are valuable to generate discussion. These materials are a magnificent option to start teaching “actual thinking skills,” Karen adds. With discussion based authentic materials, reading and discussing the text give the students a lot of chances to use their background knowledge, how they view the world and their beliefs and their critical thinking about the topic of the text. Students ask questions and start to “produce original ideas” that reflect their own thinking.

Authentic articles can be used to evoke students’ thinking about events that are happening around them in the world, so students would have different opinions, which is common and appreciated. Accordingly, learning a new language is “not just learning vocabulary and new words; we think through language” Allen suggests. Students, therefore, are expected to express themselves through language and that is what is meant by critical thinking in this context.

Issues of using authentic materials. Authentic materials can be engaging and helpful to improve reading, yet the instructors face some issues in using them. The level appropriateness, “when you are new and you are just looking at authentic materials, it is

hard to judge, well is this too much for my students, is this too easy?” Sandra explains. It is a challenge for some instructors to choose the adequate level for their students’ level while textbooks are usually assigned for a specific level.

Other instructors think that locating authentic materials that motivate the students is not an easy task. Taking into consideration the students’ interest and what if the instructors’ choices do not match their interest, “choosing something that they are not interested in would not help them in any way” Allen mentions. This could be an issue especially when you think of 20 students in the classroom. The students’ choices can bring many new vocabularies that could be difficult and need lots of work and discussion. The issue with using authentic texts is to find useful materials that match simultaneously with the students’ needs.

Using activities that complement authentic materials is another issue. The instructors needed to assign tasks that work well for the authentic text. It is great when you ask students to read an article and then ask them to write a response about it. In this case, there is combination of learning two skills – reading and writing – at the same time, which is terrific. However, instructors have to think more about varieties of activities that can be useful for the students and that correspond with the authentic text.

Because there are various nationalities in the ESL Center, the instructors deal with multicultural backgrounds. The issue of using authentic materials with different cultures can make the instructors hesitate to use them. “I just have to really think, ‘well this would offend somebody,’” Sandra mentions. The instructors emphasize that the task is the discussion of the authentic text and not the offense.

Another instructor, Tania, think that there should be cultural sensitivity when using authentic materials. The instructors feel embarrassed to read texts that are appropriate for the American culture while probably not for the students' culture.

The issue of time is one more concern with using authentic materials. The module consists of seven weeks of classes in the ESL Center and the last week is for testing. The instructors have to cover the materials assigned by the ESL Center taking into consideration struggling students who need more time to be worked with. Within the fifty minute session, the instructors find it hard to cover the textbook and add the supplemental materials. "There is pressure to complete things and it is hard to put extra stuff" Brittney expresses. When Tania starts using a text, "it is hard to replicate the situation the day before. Time just flies so fast to cover everything you want to in one class". Brittney indicates that when she uses a short story or a poem, students like to express their ideas and it is effective to observe their interpretation of the text.

If instructors give students time to express their ideas, interpret the text, and explain the message they get from the text, that consumes much time from the class. It is much better when the class is longer during the full semester and the students have two hours of reading on one day of the week. It is advantageous "to have pre-reading, troubleshooting through, and some post-reading discussion, but that is not what always happens" Katie mentions. Another example is that Tania planes to have one day for a short story discussion, then have students read it throughout the week and discuss it later on Friday. She is not able to do that for two weeks in a row because of using the textbook and time constraints.

Katie thinks that when students read authentic materials, they need time to get through it and often need some help as background information or assisting with vocabulary comprehension. She thinks that authentic materials are very important, but instructors need teacher training for using them because she believes that “there is a good way and a bad way to do them,” Katie concludes.

Summary. I use Focus Group meetings as one of the tools for collecting the data; tape records them, and transcribes each meeting. I have summaries for each meeting and I write memos to help me in coding. I analyze the data and gain insights and generate initial understanding that helps me to form some themes. I meet the instructors and understand what their beliefs are about what materials they utilize in the ESL Center at Kent State University and what is the benefit of using them. The general trends that occur from the Focus Group analysis indicate these findings: (a) Authentic materials enhance motivation; (b) Authentic materials enhance reading skills; (c) Authentic materials enhance critical thinking; (d) Issues of using authentic materials. These Findings are further discussed in chapter 5.

Survey Analysis

The purpose of the survey is to get insightful perspectives of students’ relations to authentic materials. The survey includes 30 questions: 10 qualitative and 20 quantitative questions (Appendix A). Some of these questions are dichotomous questions (14 questions); some are multiple choice questions (13 questions) and a few are scale-rating questions (three questions) that measure the frequency of using authentic materials.

The purpose from these questions is to elicit students' beliefs concerning authentic materials in their reading classes.

The number of students who respond to the survey is 74 students in the ESL Center at Kent State University. 51 of the students are males, while 23 are females. Their ages range from 18 to 35 years old. The students' levels start from level five, an intermediate level, to level 10, the advanced level, in English proficiency. The citizens of these students are: 35 Saudis, 23 Chinese, 11 Omani, one Taiwanese, one Japanese, two Kuwaiti, and two who just wrote Arabic (they do not specify their country of origin). These students have been learning English for different periods of time, extending from two months to 24 months. The following tables demonstrate the data collected through the students' answers of the survey.

Based on analysis of data, the general patterns that occurs from reading the students' answers of the survey are:

- 1) Students' preference.
- 2) Authentic materials and its relation to vocabulary.
- 3) Authentic materials and reading skills.
- 4) Sources and genre of authentic material

Students' Preference. Students' preference of using types of authentic materials is expressed in various answers in the survey. In Q 7, the students, 47 students (79%), indicate that the internet is the most preferable source of authentic materials they prefer to use in reading classes. The secondary preference is magazines from 33 students (46%). 32 students (44%) prefer books, 29 (40%) choose newspapers, 12 (17%) like using

Table 9

Survey Questions 1-6

Q1 Consent	Q2 Level of proficiency in English	Q3 Nationality	Q4 Length Of time studying English	Q5-Gender	Q6-Age
N=74	N= 74 Level 5= 4= 5% Level 6 = 1=1% Level 7= 17= 23% Level 8= 33=45% Level 9= 9= 12% Level 10= 10= 14%	N= 74 Saudi= 35=47% Chinese= 23= 31% Omani =11= 15% Taiwan= 1=1% Japanese= 1= 1% Kuwait =2=3% Others= 1= 1%	N=74 2-6 months=23=31% 7-12 months=29=39% 13-18 months =12= 16% 19-24 months = 4 =6% Others= 6= 8% Six participants indicated they didn't understand the question e.g. "every day except Saturday", "40 hours", "18 years".	N=74 Male=51= 69% Female= 31% 23	N=74 18-25=59= 80% 26-35=15= 20%

Table 10

Survey Questions 7-11

Q 7 What source of authentic materials do you prefer to use for reading in class?	Q 8 What percentage of your reading in class is authentic?	Q9 How often do you prefer to use authentic materials for reading?	Q 10 What's your opinion about the use of authentic materials in reading for your English class?	Q 11 Do you think that authentic materials help you improve your reading?
N= 72 Internet= 57=79% Magazine= 33=46% Books=32=44.4% Newspapers= 29=40.2% Schedule, tickets = 12=17% Application forms= 7= 10% Stories = 2=3% No response=2= 3%	N=72 More than 75% = 16= 22.2% 50-74% =21=29.1% 25-49%=21= 29.1% 10-24%= 13= 18% Less than 10%=1= 1.3% Never used= 0= 0%	N=72 More than75% =15= 21% 50-74%=21=29.1% 25-49%=28= 39% 10-24%= 8= 11.1% Less than 10%=0 =0% No response=2= 3%	N=72 I think authentic texts are good to use= 54=75% I do not think authentic texts are any better than other things to read=5= 7% I do not have any opinion about authentic texts=13= 18% No response=2= 3%	N= 72 Yes= 67= 93% No=5= 7%

Table 11

Survey Questions 12 - 16

12 How do you think authentic materials help you improve your reading?	Q 13 Why do you think authentic materials do not help you improve your reading skills?	Q 14 Do you think that authentic materials help you learn useful vocabulary?	Q 15 How do authentic materials help you learn useful vocabulary	Q 16 Why don't authentic materials help you learn useful vocabulary?
<p>N=51</p> <p>Authentic materials are real= 14= 27.4%</p> <p>They improve vocabulary=17=33%</p> <p>They help to learn grammar=6=12%</p> <p>They improve reading skills=8= 16%</p> <p>The motivate us to read=4=8%</p> <p>They improve writing=2= 4%</p>	<p>N= 5</p> <p>They include difficult words= 1=20%</p> <p>Idioms/ slang =1=20%</p> <p>Not useful= 1= 20%</p> <p>Availability of other reading materials= 1= 20%</p>	<p>N=69</p> <p>Yes= 63= 91%</p> <p>No= 6= 9%</p>	<p>N= 50</p> <p>Authentic materials always contain new vocabulary= 26= 52%</p> <p>They include slang and real language=9= 18%</p> <p>They are written by native speakers=5= 10%</p> <p>They include academic vocabulary=5= 10%</p> <p>We can use the new vocabulary in writing=2= 4%</p> <p>They help us with TOEFL= 2= 4%</p> <p>We learn synonym and antonym from them=1= 2%</p> <p>No response=24= 48%</p>	<p>N= 4</p> <p>It depends on the topic= 2=50%</p> <p>It includes many new words=2= 50%</p>

Table 12

Survey Questions 17-21

Q 17 At which level do you think authentic materials are beneficial for learning to read English?(please check that applies)	Q 18 In your class, do you have the chance to choose for yourself the authentic materials to read?	Q 19 Why do you choose your authentic materials to read in class?	Q 20 Why don't you choose your own authentic materials to read in class?	Q 21 If you choose authentic materials to read in class, how would you choose them? (please check all that apply)
<p>N= 68 Beginners= 23= 35.2% Intermediate= 45=68% Advanced= 20= 31%</p>	<p>N= 69 Yes= 41= 60% No= 28=40%</p>	<p>N=28 I choose what I'm interested in= 13= 46.4</p> <p>To learn more vocabulary= 3=11%</p> <p>To improve speed reading=3=11% For reading practice= 2=7% Related to my major=1=3.5% Because they are written by native speakers = 1=3.5% Improve my writing =skills=1=3-5%</p> <p>Improve other learning skills= 4=14%</p>	<p>N= 21 It's the teacher decision= 7=33%</p> <p>Textbooks are required= 6=28.5%</p> <p>No idea=5=23.8% Others= 3=14% e.g. "it is hard", "where to get them?", "no".</p>	<p>N= 67 According to level of difficulty=20=30%</p> <p>According to the length of text=5= 7%</p> <p>According to your interest= 34=51%</p> <p>According to the lesson objective=6= 9%</p> <p>According to my major =2=3%</p>

Table 13

Survey Questions 22-26

Q 22 Does using authentic materials require any help from your teacher?	Q 23 What kind of help would you need? (please check all that apply)	Q 24 Do you think authentic materials help you learn different genres?	Q 25 Please explain how authentic materials help you learn different genres?	Q 26 Do you feel confident reading any type of English texts?
N= 65 Yes= 46= 71% No= 19= 29%	N=63 To select the materials= 19= 30 % To understand the vocabulary =40= 63.4% Others=4= 6% e.g. “help in pronunciation, sentence structure, idioms, literal meaning”.	N=66 Yes= 58= 88% No= 8= 12%	N=42 They include different vocabulary=6 = 14% They have different format and topics= 5= 12% They present different style of writing=8 = 19% They motivate us to read more stories= 4= 9.5% We learn different topics and subjects=4= 9.5% We learn figurative speech= 3=7% Others= 12=28.5%	N= 67 Yes= 49= 73% No= 18= 27%

Table 14

Survey Questions 27-30

Q 27 What kinds of authentic materials do you feel confident reading?	Q 28 What kinds of authentic materials do not you feel confident reading?	Q 29 What are some kinds of authentic texts you read outside of class that you think could be used in class?	Q 30 Any other comments?
N= 37 Story=10= 27% Magazines=6= 16% Newspaper=5= 13.5% Articles=3= 8% Internet=3= 8% Others=10= 27% e.g. "science, psychology, documentary, facts, Art, famous people".	N=15 Fictions= 4= 27% Special topic articles=3= 20% Poem=2=13% Figurative and idioms=1=7% Others=5= 33% e.g. "creative essays, professional, religious, TOEFL text, drama".	N=47 Newspapers =14=30% Stories =13= 28% Magazines= 6= 13% Books=2= 4% Internet= 3=6% Others= 9= 19% e.g. "related to daily life, environmental, fashion, global warming, technology, health".	N= 21 To practice more idioms=1=5% To have Kent Newspaper in class=1=5% None=19=90%

schedules and tickets, seven (10%) prefer application forms while only two (3%) select others as story books and short stories. In this question, the students can choose more than one answer (all that apply).

The students also mention the extent they wish to use authentic materials in the reading class in Q 9. 28 students (39%) of them favour to use them 25-49% of the time in class; 21 students (29%) choose using them 50-74% of the time; 15 students (21%) have a preference to use them more than 75% of time while eight students (11%) like to use them 10-24% of the time in reading classes.

Similarly, in Q 18, the students reveal if they have a chance to choose authentic materials they read in class. 41 students (60%) of them answer “yes” while 28 (40%) of them answer “no”. In addition, the students express the kinds of authentic materials they do not feel confident to read. Four students choose fictions; three students choose special topics articles; and one chooses figurative idioms. Other students mention creative essays, professional texts, religious texts, texts, TOEFL and drama texts as problematic contents that are not easy to read.

The students explain the purpose of choosing their own authentic materials in class in Q 19. Some students, 13 of them (46%), mention that they like to read what is interesting for them; one student expresses, “I will choose some authentic materials, which I am interested in, so it doesn’t matter difficult or easy, I’ll read the book.” Another student explains, “It is because I can base it on my interest to read the authentic materials and I can select the level of reading suitable for my understanding and English reading ability”. Three students want to choose their own authentic materials in class to

learn new vocabulary. One student believes that choosing authentic materials for reading helps him to “learn more vocabulary.” Two students convey that they liked to choose reading texts that are related to their majors. One student expresses, “I will choose something in my major and it will give me a lot of new vocabulary.” In addition, two students prefer to choose their authentic materials because they believe that they improve their reading skills. “In my opinion, more reading can improve our speaking and speed in reading.” one student writes.

For the following question, Q 20, the students express their beliefs for not choosing their own authentic materials in class. Seven students (33%) think that it is the teachers’ decision to use the materials s/he needs in the class “because the teacher chooses the material for us;” “because teachers decide what we read;” “I honestly cannot choose the material in the class in order to read,” some students states. Other students, six of them (28.5%), reply that they have to study the textbook which is required and the teacher needs to finish it. The students articulates their point of view as “we have a textbook,” “there is a textbook required;” “because usually we use the articles from the book that I think are not authentic;” “that is not my choice, only the articles in the book;” “because it takes a long time so the teacher tries to finish the book.” write the students. The rest of the students who answer this question, five students (23.8%), have no idea for not being able to choose reading materials in class. e.g. “it is hard,” “where to get them?”, “no”.

Moreover, the students answer Q 21 which asks them how they choose the authentic materials in their reading class. In this question, the students can choose more

than one answer. Many students, 34 of them (51%), prefer the choice of authentic materials according to their interest; 20 students (30%) choose according to level of difficulty; 6 students (9%) prefer according to lesson objectives; five students (7%) choose according to length of text; only two students (3%) choose others, like according to their majors.

Authentic Materials and its Relation to Vocabulary

Vocabulary is considered a valuable part in reading and learning English. The students articulate the necessity of learning new vocabulary while reading authentic materials. They express that in answering different questions in the survey. One example, in Q 14, 63 students (91%) answer that they believe that authentic materials help them learn useful vocabulary while six students (9%) do not think so. In another example, when they are asked to clarify how they think authentic materials improve their reading skills in Q 12, many answer that these materials help them learn new vocabulary. Some students, 17 (33%) believe that reading these materials expose them to new vocabulary. Here are some quotations of the students' replies regarding learning vocabulary from authentic materials: "it gives me new vocabulary that I may study in my college classes;" "it gives me a lot of new words that I may study in college classes and it motivates me to learn more;" "in authentic materials, there are so many words and expressions I do not know, so I can learn things the native speaker use in their conversation and essays," "if I read the newspaper, I will write new words down in my notebook and search the meaning. This can improve my words account when I attend the

IBT exam, I can read fast and find the key words to answer the question,” the students explain.

Answering another question related to vocabulary, Q15, 26 students (52%) explain how authentic materials help them learn vocabulary. Some of the students convey that authentic materials help them read vocabulary in daily life, slang and what native speakers use: “I can learn useful vocabulary by being exposed to real materials the native speakers use;” “they include important vocabulary that is important in the academic field;” “it has many words that are different and slang;” “the vocabulary can be used in daily life;” “the vocabulary we meet in authentic materials are the ones we need to use every day; reading them can help us learn useful vocabulary from different fields,” the students explain. However, only four students answer Q 16 which asks them the reason that authentic materials do not help to learn useful vocabulary. Only four students answer this question. Two of these students (50%) reply that authentic materials include too many new words and two students (50%) write that “they are not always useful, it depends on the topic”.

Authentic materials related to reading skills. The students show general agreement that authentic materials help them to improve their reading skills. Answering Q 11, if students think that using authentic materials help to improve their reading skills, 67 students (93%) answer “Yes” while only 5 students (7%) answer “No”.

Looking at the amount of authentic texts the students study in their reading class, the students’ answers for Q 8 show that 21 students (29%) choose using authentic materials from 50 – 74% of the time; 21 students (29%) choose using them 25 – 49% of

the time; 16 students (22%) choose more than 75% of the time; 13 students (18%) choose 10 – 24% of the time; and only one student (1%) chooses using them less than 10% of the time.

Furthermore, the students articulate several ideas when they are asked how authentic materials improve their reading skills in Q 12. The students think that authentic materials can develop their critical thinking, “they are real texts that require thinking, not like the tailored ones in the reading book where you simply skim and find a clear topic sentence and support.” one student writes. Other students think authentic materials improve their reading comprehension, “authentic materials can help me understand some topic of articles better;” “how to find main ideas and analyse sentences;” “when I want to improve my skills in reading, I should read every day such as newspapers and any subject on the internet,” the students express. Moreover, they think that reading authentic materials develop their skills of skimming and scanning and improve their reading speed. “My scanning and skimming are much better than before;” and “they help me read more quickly than before,” “I can read fast and find the key words to answer the questions,” the students mention.

On the contrary, when the students are asked why the authentic materials do not help them to improve reading skills in Q 13, only five students answer. Some students think that they are useless and there can be other alternatives to use in class. Another student thinks that authentic materials include difficult vocabulary; nevertheless, they enhance reading skills:

It is hard to understand each word so I skip it, but usually I find difficult words in a sentence so that I misunderstand the meaning. Another reason the articles use idioms and slang sentences I do not understand even though I translate them. For this, I lose my confidence. However, I believe that it is a good way to improve our skills especially when we will start studying at universities (The student writes).

Genre and sources of authentic materials. Learning genre refers to learning different styles of English like fictions, essays, humour and drama. The students are asked if authentic materials help them learn different genres in Q 24. About 58 students (88%) of the students' answer "Yes" while eight students (12%) reply "No". The students explain further in the following question, Q 25, and express how authentic materials help them learn different genres. By reading various genres, the students learn terminology related to specific genres. "I know the style of writing in each genre and which words are used in each genre;" "because authentic materials have lots of vocabulary that help me to learn professional English very well" the students explain. Other students think that they learn different writing styles through the authentic materials. For example, the students state, "we learn different topics and know the difference in their formats;" "in authentic materials, there are so many types of texts I have never expected because it is not like textbooks someone made for English learners." The students explain.

Concerning the sources of authentic materials, the students mention some sources while answering Q 7. The students can choose more than one selection in this question. Many students, 57 (79%) indicate that internet is the most preferable source of authentic

materials they prefer to use in reading classes. The secondary preference is magazines; 33 (46%) students like to use them in reading; 32 (44%) of them prefer books; 29 students (40%) choose newspapers; 12 students (17%) like using schedules and tickets; 7 students (10%) prefer application forms while only two students (3%) select others like storybooks and short stories.

There is a question, Q 27, asking the students what kind of authentic materials the students feel confident to read. Some students, 10 (27%), prefer reading stories; six students (16%) like reading magazines; five students (13.5%) feel comfortable reading newspapers; three students (8%) choose reading articles and three (8%) choose internet texts as materials they feel comfortable reading. Others, 10 students (27%) mention scientific and psychological reading texts, documentary, art context and facts about well-known people.

Regarding the style of authentic materials that the students read outside the classroom, they points out several reading genres while answering Q 29. Some students, 14 (30%) prefer to read daily newspapers; 13 students (28%) like reading stories; six (13%) students favour reading magazines; three students (6%) choose reading from the internet; three students (6%) like reading history; and two students (4%) like reading books. Some students, nine (19%) choose to read authentic texts that are related to the content of their textbook; political contents, technology texts, life related texts and other topics like fashion, global warming, environment and health.

Other things I learn from the students' responses in the survey, Q17, Q22, Q23, are the level and support needed while using authentic materials. However, these replies are

not reoccurring categories. In Q 17, Most students, 45 (68%) think that authentic materials are valuable for learning in the intermediate level, while 23 students (35%) think they are beneficial in the beginner level and 20 (31%) choose to use them in the advanced level of learning English.

For the support needed in using authentic materials, the students' answers for Q22 indicate that 46 students (71%) think that they require their teachers' support while 19 students (29%) think there is no need for teachers' help. Answering Q 23, 40 students (63%) believe that they need help to understand the vocabulary, while 19 students (30%) think that they need help in selecting the authentic materials. The other 4 students (6%) believe that they need help understanding idioms, literal meanings and the right pronunciation.

To sum up, the survey is used to collect the data from the students to understand their insights and perceptions of using authentic materials in their reading classes. The students answer multiple choice questions and other open ended questions. In general, the students believe that authentic materials can improve their reading skills in general and their vocabulary, in specific. The students also show interest in reading various sources and genres of authentic materials that match their level of proficiency in English.

The emphasis of students on choosing their authentic materials is highly expressed in the survey. Therefore, there should be a better consideration for students to choose the materials they mention that they are interested to read. The students point out some of these materials like online texts, newspapers, magazines and stories.

In addition, the students believe that authentic materials are major sources for learning vocabulary and idioms. Therefore, we need to consider more development in reading materials for ESL students that suit their needs.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examines the nature, the extent, and the use of authentic materials that are used in reading classes in the ESL Center at Kent State University. Moreover, the study explores the instructors' and students' insights and perceptions towards using the authentic materials in reading to learn English. Data are collected through (a) textbooks analysis, (b) focus groups, (c) a students' survey. The study is conducted in the ESL Center at Kent State University. The focus group participants are ESL instructors who teach reading, and the survey respondents are students from reading classes in the ESL Center.

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the findings and discuss the study results in relation to the literature research. Other purposes are to describe implications of the study, and to offer suggestions for future research.

Summary of Findings

This section includes a summary of the results of, the textbooks analysis, the focus group discussion and the students' survey.

Textbook Analysis

Five textbooks used in teaching Reading in the ESL center at Kent State University are analysed (Appendix D). Some of these reading textbooks include some authentic materials and only one textbook, *Mosaic I*, includes a wide range of them. Marginalia is mostly used in most of the first four textbooks. Other materials include: Magazine articles, website articles, new paper articles, stories, cartoons, narratives,

poetry, proverbs, blogs, autobiography are regularly used in all the textbooks. However, there is one issue of the lack of authentic materials that students need to function in daily life circumstances. The idea of relating learning to daily life is confirmed by Dewey (1997) who emphasizes that one of the general goals of education is to teach students the experience of life outside school. In addition, Leu & Kinzer (2000) support that the goal of our work as teachers is to relate the curriculum to students' future needs and interests.

The second issue of the authentic materials used in these textbooks is that all of them include many uncited materials except one, *Mosaic I* (Knezevic & Wegmann, 2007) in which all the included materials are cited in the reference page of the book. The authors of this textbook are not the same as of the other four reading textbooks. Some of the other authors publish more than one of the reading textbooks. In *Mosaic I* (Knezevic & Wegmann, 2007), the authors give credits for all the materials and pictures they use in the textbook while the other authors of the other textbooks do not pay much attention to this issue.

This issue of not citing all the materials in the reading textbooks makes me, as a researcher, raise important questions about the reasons behind not citing some reading materials. There could be various possibilities for not citing all the materials in the textbooks. First, the publisher of the textbook could be the author of all the reading texts that are used in the textbook, which means s/he is the author of the whole textbook.

Another reason for not citing all the reading materials could be for business issues. In other words, the publisher should pay for using the materials that belong to other publishers, but the publisher avoids that by not giving credit to the original writer

and publisher. The other possibility of not citing some materials in the textbooks is that they do not have any references or have unclear reference for citing them.

For the previous reasons, there is one conclusion: the data presented many uncited (unknown) materials or not referenced materials. Hence, it is hard to decide whether these materials are truly authentic or not. If we consider them authentic who can guarantee that they are written by native speakers while we cannot find who the author is? Therefore, uncited materials cause difficulty to make decisions about the contents of the textbooks or to evaluate them in the matter of authenticity.

In summary five textbooks used in teaching reading in the ESL Center at Kent State University are analyzed. Regarding the use of authentic texts in these five textbooks, there are not so many authentic materials in most of the textbooks. In the first three textbooks, *Interaction Access* (Hartmann & Mentel, 2007); *Interaction 1* (Hartmann & Kirn, 2007); *Interaction 2* (Hartmann & Kirn, 2007); most of the authentic materials are marginalia presented at the beginning of each chapter. Other than that, there are some articles and few stories not cited or credited by the authors. By contrast, there are different kinds of authentic texts used in the fourth textbook, *Mosaic I* (Knzevic & Wegman, 2007), and all of them are cited. The last textbook, *Ten Steps to Improve College Reading Skills* (Langan, 2008), has some authentic /cited reading texts, passages and essays and only few of them are cited.

As mentioned, some of the reading textbooks include few authentic materials and only one textbook, *Mosaic I*, includes a wide range of them. Some authentic materials are presented exclusively in some textbooks such as: Magazine articles, website articles,

newspaper articles, stories, and marginalia; however, there is a lack of authentic materials that students need to function in daily life circumstances; in other words they are all functional materials.

Focus Groups

The focus group discussions with instructors reflect these findings: (1) Recognition of the nature of authentic materials that the instructors use; (2) a belief that authentic materials enhance reading skills; (3) a belief that authentic materials improve critical thinking; (4) a belief that authentic materials increase motivation; and (5) acknowledgement that there are some issues and challenges regarding the use of authentic materials in reading classes.

The sources that the instructors mostly use are fiction stories, online sources, non-fiction articles and textbooks. The online/media sources include the National Public Radio (NPR), the Cable News Network, (CNN), and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). The students practice reading and listening to these authentic materials and learn to understand different genres from these texts that are different from their textbooks.

The instructors believe that the authentic materials increase the students' motivation to read. Research shows extensive motivation in students when they use authentic materials (Berardo, 2006; Cook, 1981). Students feel proud of themselves when they read what actually native speakers read. The students also enjoy reading from different websites and different writing styles and it is pleasure for them to read rather than to stick to their textbooks as one source all the time. Moreover, students find it

interesting to read contents related to daily life that matches their interest or major of studies.

Furthermore, the instructors believe that authentic materials are valuable for improving reading skills and vocabulary learning. This belief is supported by Cook (1981) who agrees that providing students with authentic materials can motivate them because they practice vocabulary in class that they can use outside their classrooms. When students read short stories they learn skimming and scanning and they are exposed to natural style of writing. They learn how to guess meaning from contexts and strengthen their vocabulary. Subsequently, they can use the new vocabulary in their discussions and share opinions about the reading text.

In addition, the instructors believe that authentic materials enhance critical thinking. Students read different topics, and they learn to raise questions and connect what they read to related concepts or separate what is unrelated, as is found by Kelly and colleagues (2002). When students read different genres, they have to break them down and approach them critically. They practice deep thinking to infer meanings and evaluate arguments as they should perform in the academic level. Learning a new language is not only learning words and vocabulary, but also thinking through the language and being able to express yourself through it.

Additionally, instructors realize some issues of using authentic materials. One of the issues is *the level appropriateness*. It is hard to judge if the authentic materials are suitable for the students' level because the textbooks are always assigned for their specific level. Alomari (2009) concurs that authentic materials are great tools for

students' participations and they engage students with different materials to work on when teachers select what is appropriate for their levels and culture. Another issue is the students' interest and whether the materials match their needs especially when you have more than twenty students in a class. The third issue is using activities that work well with authentic texts. Oguz & Bahar (2008) go along with the idea that the features of authentic learning are to structure knowledge and complete related tasks; to relate the students' activities to real life skills; to continue learning out of classroom contexts such as work and home; and to learn in a collaboration environment. Instructors need to think about activities that could be helpful for students and match with the authentic texts. The fourth issue is the culture sensitivity of using authentic materials. Kilickaya (2004) believes that there are many nationalities among international students and it is hard to guess if the materials could offend any of them and that is what the instructors in the focus groups also mention. Learners need to learn about the culture to recognize meanings and learn the language successfully. The last issue is the time concern; instructors have limited time to cover their textbooks that are assigned by the ESL Center and have no extra time for inserting supplementing materials.

Students' Survey

There are four major findings for the students' survey:

Students' Preferences. The first finding of the survey shows that the students have much interest in using authentic materials in reading classes. Research also confirms significant motivation in students when they use authentic materials (Berardo, 2006; Cook, 1981). Most students prefer the internet reading texts as a source of authentic

materials. Magazine is the secondary preference; the following are books, newspapers, schedules and tickets, application forms, and short stories. Cook (1981), Jacobson et al. (2003), and Nunan (2000) support the idea that these kinds of sources of materials and the relevant activities usually attract the students and engage them in learning.

Many students indicate that they like a chance to use the authentic materials to read (60%). Langer and Flihan (2000) state that the students' learning is certainly affected when they are offered "choice in what they read and write", and these authors go on to add that students thrive when they "are permitted opportunities to write about topics and ideas that interest them" (p. 123).

Authentic Materials and their Relation to Vocabulary. The second finding of the survey indicates that most students (91%) believe that authentic materials help them learn new vocabulary. The students believe that authentic materials help them learn the vocabulary they need in colleges and increase the amount of new vocabulary needed for taking IBT exams. The students also convey that authentic materials help them learn the vocabulary of daily life, slang, idioms and the words that native speakers use. Tanti & Yusuf (2010) endorse that when students have the opportunity to read and learn from authentic texts meanings, they read the real language that native speakers use and language learners usually prefer to be native speaker like in terms of pronunciation, accent and idioms usage.

Authentic Materials and Reading Skills. The third finding of the survey shows that most students (93%) believe that authentic materials improve their reading skills. They think that these materials improve their critical thinking because they use different

format that the one used in the selection of textbooks. Newspapers and articles from the internet improve their reading comprehension, reading speed and skimming and scanning skills.

Sources and Genre of Authentic Material. The fourth finding of the survey concerns learning genre. Learning genre refers to learning different types of English like fiction, essays, humour, and drama. Most students (88%) explain that authentic materials help them to understand different genres. While reading various genres, the students learn specialized terms related to specific genres.

Reading from the internet is the major source that the students keep mentioning in their answers. Internet is widely used nowadays and many students have access to it on their cell phones, at the universities or at home. Cook (1981); Jacobson et al. (2003) and Nunan (2000) agree that the materials from these sources and the relevant activities usually attract the students and engage them in learning. Students also express that they prefer choosing the authentic materials according to their interest. Hence, considering students' interest to choose their reading materials should be part of material development processes to suit the students' need. Students like to read materials that are related to their majors and other sources and genres that include different terms than that of their textbooks.

In summary, the survey is used to collect data and understand the students' insights and perceptions towards using authentic materials in their reading classes. The major finding indicates that the students believe that authentic materials could improve their vocabulary learning and reading skills in general. Moreover, the students show

substantial interest in reading various sources and genre of authentic materials. They emphasize choosing their own authentic materials to a great extent. Hence, students' choice for reading materials should be further implemented by instructors and curriculum developers to encourage students to read more. Internet materials are highly appreciated by the students as sources for reading authentic materials and others as newspapers, magazines, and stories.

As expressed from students' survey, it is obvious that the students recognize the value of using and choosing their authentic materials in reading, and this raises the question: Why are these materials not used since they are highly appreciated by students? Therefore, we recommend intensifying the use of authentic materials as supplementing materials to the reading textbooks or to incorporate them within the reading textbooks.

Summary

First, the analysis of the textbooks reveals several authentic materials like magazine articles, internet articles, newspaper articles, stories, cartoons, narratives, poetry, proverbs, blogs, autobiography that are regularly used in the five textbooks. The students learn essential reading skills like summarizing, skimming, scanning, finding main and implied ideas and learning new vocabulary and making inference. Nevertheless, these textbooks require some other authentic materials that assist the students to function in the English language environment and learn the daily language that the native speakers use in everyday circumstances.

Another major finding of the textbooks analysis is that many of the authentic materials are not cited in all of the textbooks except in *Mosaic1* (Knezevic & Wegmann,

2007). The issue of uncited materials makes it harder for the researcher to evaluate the authenticity of these texts since no information about them is available in the reference page of the textbook.

Second, the focus groups analysis indicates that the instructors believe that the authentic materials increase the students' motivation to read. Students enjoy reading materials related to daily life that match their interest or major of studies. Furthermore, the instructors believe that authentic materials are valuable for improving reading skills and vocabulary learning. Students learn how to guess meaning from contexts and strengthen their vocabulary. In addition, the instructors believe that authentic materials enhance critical thinking. Students practice profound thinking, infer meanings and evaluate situations as they should achieve in their academic studies. Nevertheless, instructors view some issues of using authentic materials like level appropriateness of materials, students' interest, activities that match the materials, the cultural sensitivity and the time concern to use the materials with the assigned textbook.

Last, the survey analysis shows several findings; the first is that the students have much interest to use authentic materials in reading classes. Most students prefer the internet reading texts as a source of authentic materials. The second finding of the survey indicates that most students think that authentic materials assist them to build new vocabulary, idioms, slang and daily life vocabulary. The third finding of the survey shows that most students believe that authentic materials improved their reading skills and they mention that these materials enhance their reading comprehension, speed and skimming and scanning skills. The fourth finding of the survey is related to sources and

genre of authentic materials. Students highly appreciate internet, magazines, books, newspaper, schedule, tickets, application forms, short stories, documentary, and scientific texts.

From all of the above data analysis, we can observe that there are mutual features that both the instructors and the students believe in using authentic materials. Both of them believe that authentic materials have many sources like internet, magazines, newspapers and stories that are useful to improve the students' reading skills and strengthen their vocabulary. In addition, both of them consider authentic materials as a source for enhancing critical thinking that the students need in their future academic studies. After all, both the instructors and the students think that there are some issues with using authentic materials like time issue, level appropriateness of the materials and considering the students' interest to read what match their needs and majors.

Implications

As shown in the textbooks analysis, there are several authentic materials in the reading textbooks used in the ESL Center. They include magazine articles, website articles, newspaper articles, stories, cartoons, narratives, poetry, proverbs, blogs, autobiography that are regularly used in the five textbooks. These are good sources for reading authentic materials; however, the students need to read more functional materials that help them to function in the target society. Oguz & Bahar (2008) found that the features of authentic learning are to structure knowledge and complete related tasks to relate the students' activities to real life skills. The students need to read texts that the native speakers use in their daily basis. For example, the students can use application

forms or reply to an official letter. These kinds of authentic materials are not hard to obtain. For example, instructors can get menus from restaurants, tickets from train stations, application forms from any organization website, personal bills and receipts, maps of direction of the university campus, and comics and political cartoons from newspapers. Another suggestion is that authors could relate technology use to textbooks. They can refer to a specific site where students can find the reading text and explore more about it.

Some instructors think that authentic materials are not easy to evaluate according to the students' learning levels. It is easy to decide for beginners, but the advanced level instructors might need mentoring or workshops on how to use the materials for the suitable students' level. Another concern for instructors about using authentic materials is the time issue, and the fact that they have to use specific textbooks assigned by the administrators. Thus, it is hard to find enough time for supplementing materials.

Moreover, using uncited materials in the reading textbooks makes it hard to recognize the source of such materials. Publishers should compose clear citation or references of the reading texts that are used in these reading textbooks. Finding the reference could help the researcher to evaluate the text and understand, for example, if the text is adapted or authentic, if it is written by native speaker or not, and to recognize the source that the text is taken from. Appropriate citation can also help instructors and students if they are interested to look up at the source of the text and read more about it if it is abstracted in the textbook. In addition, students can read similar contents from the

same source for those who are motivated to read further in specific area or look for one kind of reading genre.

From the focus group analysis, the instructors explain that authentic materials motivate the students to read, improve their reading skills, improve their vocabulary and enhance their critical thinking. This suggests that authentic materials are valuable and should be utilized in teaching reading skills for the ESL students. Cook (1981); Harmer (2002) and Jacobson et al. (2003) found that students feel excited to use materials that are relevant to their daily lives and these materials are more applicable to students who desire to visit or study in a foreign country. As mentioned, instructors agree that authentic materials are valuable in teaching reading, and this is what the research confirms.

However, this perspective raises the question: Why are not authentic materials widely used in language classrooms despite the fact that instructors and research confirm their validity? One hypothesis of not using them, as mentioned above, the necessity of completing the textbook contents assigned by administrators, and another is the lack of professional experience of the instructors to use them with students.

Another point is that, students express much interest to use authentic materials. This raises another question: Since students are involved in using authentic materials, why are there limited authentic texts in their textbooks? In other words, why instruction is not responsive to students' interests considering feedback of students? This question can be raised to the policy makers in the ESL center or to the curriculum designers, so they consider the students' needs to choose textbooks that can include more authentic

materials or to prepare supplementing authentic materials to be arranged to use by the instructors.

For instructors, there could be various ways of implementing authentic materials in their reading classes. Instructors could make use of the internet access that is available in the university and ask students to read texts according to their interests from assigned websites and then bring them to class for presentations or for discussion. Furthermore, instructors could use magazines and stories for homework reading and students could summarize what they have read later in classes. Students can read these materials as homework, so instructors can work with the assigned textbook in class to avoid time limitation issues.

Another important point for instructors is the use of authentic materials type that can help the students to function in their daily life. Reading bills, announcements, advertisements, brochures, tickets and official reports are as necessary for students as reading articles from magazines or newspapers. Cook (1981) confirms that authentic readings that the students study in class help them to use the language and associate with the new language in its social context. These types of materials can help the students to communicate in the target language and solve issues in their daily life.

Students who participate in the survey respond that they are interested in reading authentic materials in their reading classes and believe that they are effective in learning new vocabulary and improving reading skills. The students highlight the internet as a good source of authentic materials that is generally available and easy to access. They also emphasize their need to choose their authentic materials that they are interested in

reading. Langer& Flihan (2000) also found that the students' options are important and this study supports this perspective and adds to the present experience of data. We can help students by teaching them to find authentic materials searching the internet and selecting a text about their favourite personality to read it and then present it to the class. Another way is that we can ask them to read an article of their preference from a newspaper or a magazine and then bring some new expressions learned from the article to explain and share with the classmate.

For the above reasons, students should get the opportunity to choose a text at least every week to read, understand and then discuss in class with the instructors and the classmates. This opportunity motivates students to practice reading, and gain vocabulary. They develop reading skills while reading something they choose and are interested in reading.

Since most students like to read from internet sources, there could be one reading class that takes place in the lab where all students get access to the internet and choose a text to read. Kilickaya (2004) noticed that using the internet or other accessible sources for authentic material help students learn about the culture, recognize meanings and learn the language successfully. While reading in the lab, students could get assistance from the instructors if they face any difficulties in understanding some features of the text. Additionally, students feel motivated because they read a text of their own choice and not the one planned by their instructor.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future studies could be conducted to apply using some authentic materials with ESL students. One possible research question could be: Does using authentic materials improve students vocabulary learning and reading skills? The reason to ask this research question is to find if using authentic materials make difference and enhance learners' reading skills. Since students in the survey believe that authentic materials improve their vocabulary, students in a further study could take a pre-test and then to be exposed to authentic materials that might include idioms or daily life expressions to read in class. Next, they take post-test to examine how much vocabulary and reading skills they gain from these materials. Hence, there could be a chance to evaluate whether authentic texts are valuable to learn reading skills and some useful vocabulary or not.

In addition, students in the same study could be asked in a survey about the authentic materials that they used in class and what their beliefs concerning their usefulness. The possible research question for that could be: What is the attitude of students towards authentic reading materials? Sometimes what a researcher find from the pre-test, post-test and the students' perspectives are dichotomous; hence, a more detailed study of this topic should be considered.

As one of the study findings demonstrates that using authentic materials enhance students' motivation, there could be a whole study to evaluate students' motivation while reading authentic materials.

Berardo (2006) stated that the students found authentic materials that the teacher selected engaging and more up-to-date than textbooks. A research question for the study could be: Do authentic materials motivate students' to read? To answer this question

instructors can use authentic materials in reading and observe students motivation and also could give them a survey to identify their impressions of using authentic materials in class.

Another study is recommended that involves what students are reading on the internet. These questions are suggested for a future study: What do students' read on the internet? What kind of internet texts are students interested to read? Because the ESL students in this study are highly interested to read authentic materials from internet sources, the further study can examine the types of authentic texts that students are interested to read from the internet and why they prefer the internet sources to read. This could be done through collecting the internet reading materials from students and examining them as document analysis to understand their style or genre. Also the future study, using a survey, could discover if there are any differences between males' and females' reading interest. In this context, Marshall (2000) explains that genders likely deal with reading and writing responses to texts in various ways.

This investigation is conducted in the ESL Center of Kent State University. It should be replicated at another university, using a larger random sample. A larger random sample would decrease sampling bias and would be appropriate to represent the populations (Gay & Airasian, 2000). Since students and instructors are in favour of using authentic materials, other studies should be conducted with different populations to ensure these materials' effectiveness and students' benefit from them. Additionally, there are limited studies that involve using authentic materials with non ESL students, and more need to be undertaken.

Conclusion

The goal of this investigation is to explore the nature, the extent, and the use of authentic materials that are used in reading classes at the ESL Center at Kent State University. Additionally, the study explores instructors' and students' insights and perceptions towards using the authentic materials in reading to learn English. The questions are answered using analysis of the reading textbooks at the ESL Center at Kent State University; Focus groups with the instructors of reading classes who participated in the study; and a survey for the students who participated in the study at the ESL Center.

The results of this investigation presented that authentic materials are generally used in the reading textbooks; however, in many cases they lack appropriate citations. Other Findings of the study are in accord with existing research that both instructors and students believe that authentic materials are valuable for reading classes.

These findings presented the types of authentic materials that are used in the reading textbooks at the ESL Center at Kent State University. These findings can be valuable for policy makers and instructors to focus on what materials these textbooks need to be added and to be improved to best suit learners' needs. In addition, the results of the instructors' focus group present positive beliefs to use authentic materials; therefore, this could be used for guiding them through seminars or workshops on what kind of authentic materials they should use and how to use them.

Furthermore, the findings demonstrate the positive attitude for students to use and choose their authentic materials in class. Then, more emphasis could be directed by

policyholders at the ESL Center to implement more authentic materials in reading and give more space for learners' choice of reading materials.

For future research, there could be more studies on how authentic materials impact students' reading and about their attitudes to use them. Moreover, it is worthy to consider a research that demonstrates if there is a relation between students' motivation and reading authentic materials and if students' prefer reading texts from the internet and how it influences their reading.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SURVEY

Appendix A

Survey

Authentic materials are usually described as texts that are not produced for teaching purposes but are produced by natives for native speakers (Cook, 1981; Jacobson & Degener, & Gates, 2003; Morrow, 1977). Authentic materials is “using examples of language produced by native speakers for some real purpose of their own rather than using language produced and designed solely for the classroom” (Cook, 1981, p. 1). Authentic materials could be printed as maps, brochures, restaurant menus, application forms, time tables, travelling tickets, posters, announcements, newspapers and magazine articles. Other materials could be audio such as conversation, songs or radio shows and audio-visual materials such as movies or TV programs.

Level.....

Nationality.....

Time length of Studying English (Months/ years)

Q1. Based on your reading assignments you have per week, about what percentage of your reading would be considered authentic?

- More than 75% of the time
- 50-74% of the time.
- 25-49% of the time
- 10- 24 % of the time
- Less than 10% of the time
- I have never used authentic texts

Q2. What’s your opinion about the use of authentic texts in reading for your English classes?

- I think authentic texts are good to use.
- I do not think authentic texts are any better than other things to read.

- I do not have any opinion about authentic texts.

Q3. Do you think that using authentic materials help you improve your reading skills?

- Yes
- If yes, how do you think they help you improve?

.....

.....

.....

.....

- No
- If no, why do you think they do not help you improve your reading skills?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Q4. Do you think that authentic materials help you learn useful vocabulary?

- Yes
- If yes, how does it help?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- No
- If not, why doesn't it help you learn vocabulary?

.....

.....

.....

Q5. At which level do you prefer to use authentic materials for reading? (You can check more than one level here)

- Beginners
- Intermediate
- Advanced

Q6. What source of authentic English materials do you prefer to use for reading in class?
(Check all that apply)

- Magazines
- Newspapers
- Internet
- Application forms
- Books
- Schedules, tickets, etc.
- Other, please list ones you prefer

.....

Q7. How often do you prefer to use authentic materials for reading?

- More than 75% of the time.
- 50-74% of the time.
- 25-49% of the time
- 10- 24 % of the time
- Less than 10% of the time

Q8. Do you choose your own authentic material to read in class?

- Yes
If yes, explain why?

.....

- No
If no, explain why not?

.....

Q9. How would you choose authentic texts? You can select more than one response.

- According to level of difficulty
- According to the length of text
- According to your interest
- According to the lesson objective
- Others.....
.....
.....

Q10. Does using authentic materials require any help from your teacher?

- Yes
- No

Q11. If you answered Yes, What kind of help would you need? You can select more than one response.

- To select the materials
- To understand the vocabulary
- Other

Q12. Genres are defined by style, content and form. They include fiction, poetry, autobiography, science fiction, non-fiction short story, essay, speech, humor, drama...etc....Do authentic materials help you learn different genres?

- Yes
- If yes explain how?
.....
.....
.....
- No

Q13. Do you feel confident reading any type of English texts?

- Yes
- If yes, what kinds of things do you feel confident reading?
.....
.....
.....

- No
- If no, what kinds of authentic texts you do not feel confident to read

.....
.....
.....

Q14. What are some kinds of authentic texts you read outside of class that you think could be used IN class?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Comments

.....

APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS FOR THE INSTRUCTORS

Appendix B

Focus Group Questions for the Instructors

1. What are some of the best kinds of texts to use in English teaching?
2. What are your experiences with using authentic texts in EFL/ESL teaching?
3. How best can authentic texts be used in English teaching
4. What are some of the issues with using authentic texts in English teaching?
5. Is there anything else you would like to say about the use of authentic texts in the teaching of English?

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP TRANSCRIPT

Appendix C

Focus Group Transcript Sample

Amal Laba

DM420041

Focus group #2

*Q signifies interviewer

*A signifies interviewee

*A

There we go.

*A

Yeah.

*Q

Alright. First, what are some of the best kinds of (inaudible) in English teaching do you think? Anyone has anything for me to know? Some people like the textbooks, some people don't.

*A

I think it'd be particular to the students' needs so not all students are going into the same field but if you can pick maybe a variety of text that maybe cover the needs of particular students, for instance, you don't focus only on literature, you don't focus only on articles based on science or technology or anything. Like this, you cover a field. That's what I think.

*Q

Mhmm.

*A

I think in terms of the textbook it depends a lot on the textbook. I am, I'm teaching out of the Mosaic right now, level 8, and I really like the articles that their providing us. They're very challenging vocabulary words, they're very similar to what I, I associate with a regular college textbook, so it's really challenging them to learn new words. I try to supplement that with other things but I'm, I'm actually quite happy with the current textbook.

*A

Mhmm.

*Q

'Cause that's that's from (inaudible)?

*A

Yeah and that text takes authentic text into the book.

*A

Yeah I still use it.

*A

Right.

*A

Yeah.

*A

Yeah, so you're providing authentic text even if you teach it right out of the book.

*A

Yeah.

*A

Yeah.

*A

Yeah, sure.

*Q

What do you think Justin?

*A

APPENDIX D
TEXTBOOK LIST

Appendix D

Textbook List

LEVEL	AUTHOR	TITLE	ISBN	CHAPTERS
Reading 1	Hartman & Mentel	<i>Interactions Access: Reading.</i> Silver edition.	978-0-07-340634-3	1-5
Reading 2	Hartman & Mentel	<i>Interactions Access: Reading.</i> Silver edition.	978-0-07-340634-3	6-10
Reading 3	Hartman & Kirn	<i>Interactions 1: Reading.</i> Silver edition.	978-0-07-313811-4	1-5
Reading 4	Hartman & Kirn	<i>Interactions 1: Reading.</i> Silver edition.	978-0-07-313811-4	6-10
Reading 5	Wegmann & Knezevic	<i>Interactions 2: Reading.</i> Silver edition	978-0-07-340635-0	1-5
Reading 6	Wegmann & Knezevic	<i>Interactions 2: Reading.</i> Silver edition	978-0-07-340635-0	6-10
Reading 7	Wegmann & Knezevic	<i>Mosaic 1: Reading.</i> Silver edition	978-0-07-340639-8	1-5
Reading 8	Wegmann & Knezevic	<i>Mosaic 1: Reading.</i> Silver edition	978-0-07-340639-8	6-10
Reading 9	John Langan.	<i>Ten Steps to Building College Reading Skills.</i> 5th edition.	978-1-59194-243-6	Intro-2-3-4-5
Reading 10	John Langan.	<i>Ten Steps to Building College Reading Skills.</i> 5th edition.	978-1-59194-243-6	6-7-8-9-10

APPENDIX E

AUDIOTAPE CONSENT FORM

Appendix E

Audiotape Consent Form

The use of authentic materials in reading in the ESL center at Kent State University.
Amal Laba

I agree to participate in an audio-taped interview about [The use of authentic materials in reading] as part of this project and for the purposes of data analysis. I agree that [Amal Laba] may audio-tape this interview. The date, time and place of the interview will be mutually agreed upon.

Signature

Date

I have been told that I have the right to listen to the recording of the interview before it is used. I have decided that I:

_____ want to listen to the recording

_____ do not want to listen to the recording

Sign now below if you do not want to listen to the recording. If you want to listen to the recording, you will be asked to sign after listening to them.

[Amal Laba] may / may not (circle one) use the audio-tapes of me. The original tapes or copies may be used for:

_____ this research project _____ publication _____ presentation at professional meetings

Signature

Date

APPENDIX F

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Appendix F

Informed Consent to Participate In a Research Study

Study Title: The use of authentic materials in reading in the ESL center at Kent State University.

Principal Investigator: Amal Laba

You are being invited to participate in a research study. This consent form will provide you with information on the research project, what you will need to do, and the associated risks and benefits of the research. Your participation is voluntary. Please read this form carefully. It is important that you ask questions and fully understand the research in order to make an informed decision. You will receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to examine the authentic materials that are used in reading classes in the ESL center at Kent State University. For example, what's the amount of authentic texts that are used in teaching, what types of authentic materials are used and how they are used? Moreover, the study aims to explore the teachers' and students' insights and perceptions towards using the authentic materials in reading to learn English. The teachers' perceptions are considered as data source to inform the study about the type and effectiveness of authentic materials they use; to what levels and what standards they use these materials. The students' perception is the third source of data and their insights determines if authentic texts help to improve their language proficiency in general and their reading skills in specific.

Procedures

Both quantitative and the qualitative approaches are used in this study. Texts analysis of the materials that are used in teaching reading is one way to collect the data. The textbooks are examined for using authentic texts within them, to what extent the authentic texts are used and in what way they are used. The second source for the data collection is meeting teachers as a focus group. Focus group corresponds with the research questions because it deals with the experiences of individuals from their own perspectives. The researcher will meet the teachers for 30-45 minutes to discuss the topic of authentic materials and audio tape the conversation. The last source of data is a survey for the students. The purpose of the survey is to get insightful perspectives of students' relations to authentic materials. The survey that will take 30 minutes during a reading class requires the students to answer some multiple choice questions and other open ended questions.

Audio and Video Recording and Photography

Only the focus group discussion with the teachers will be tape recorded. The recorded data will be analyzed and then deleted upon study completion. The recorded data will not be used for any further study or programs. The teachers will have the choice to hear their conversations before using them in the study.

Benefits

The findings of this study can help teachers to understand more about the ESL materials in reading and to reflect on their choices of teaching materials and how to improve them. It is also helpful for teachers to focus on students' materials preferences that facilitate their reading.

Risks and Discomforts

There are no anticipated risks beyond those encountered in everyday life.

Privacy and Confidentiality

All the participants will be given pseudonyms after data collection. These pseudonyms will be used even in the data analysis by the researcher. All the participants will be given a consent to sign before starting the survey and the focus group and each participant has the right to withdraw from answering the survey or participating in the focus group any time they choose. The focus group data will be confidential according to the law by the researcher. However, because of the nature of focus group meetings, confidentiality is not guaranteed by the teachers. Taking that into consideration, the participants are asked to keep the information discussed confidential. The data will not be shared with any of the students or teachers during gathering data. The signed assent forms and the recorded discussions will be kept in my advisor's office; Dr. Wendy Kasten, 404 White Hall.

Compensation

All the participants will not receive any credits or grades for their participation in the study.

Voluntary Participation

All the participants will be given a consent to sign before starting the survey or the focus group and each participant has the right to withdraw from answering the survey or the focus group any time they choose. The data will not be shared with any of the students or teachers during gathering data.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, you may contact Amal Laba at alaba@kent.edu or Dr. Wendy Kasten at wkasten@kent.edu. 330 672 06 37. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or complaints about the research, you may call the IRB at 330.672.2704.

Consent Statement and Signature

I have read this consent form and have had the opportunity to have my questions answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that a copy of this consent will be provided to me for future reference.

Participant Signature

Date

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