A Comparison of Text Authenticity and Focus of Reading Comprehension Questions between an English and Turkish as a Foreign Language Coursebook

Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Ve Yabancı Dil Olarak Türkçe Ders Kitaplarında Metin Özgünlüğü İle Anlama Soruları Odağının Karşılaştırılması

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ABSTRACT

There is general agreement that texts and tasks used in foreign language instruction exhibiting a higher degree of authenticity have the potential to provide better learning opportunities in the classroom and prepare learners more adequately for language use outside the classroom. Acknowledging the significance of text and task authenticity, this study examined two coursebooks - coming from different foreign language teaching contexts drawing on unequal amounts of research and experience - in terms of reading text authenticity and comprehension question focus. The books analyzed were the English as a foreign language (EFL) coursebook English File Elementary Student's Book (EF) and the Turkish as a foreign language (TFL) coursebook Pratik Türkçe. Practical Turkish. Self-study and Classroom Use with Grammar References (PT). The results of the study revealed that PT nearly exclusively used non-authentic texts, while the proportion of non-authentic, semi-authentic and authentic texts was more balanced in EF. Furthermore, PT relied more strongly upon questions checking literal comprehension, while EF displayed a greater variety of comprehension question foci with an emphasis on questions triggering high-order thinking engaging learners in drawing inference or putting content into a personal perspective. Conclusions for material design in foreign language learning are drawn.

Keywords: *Text authenticity, task authenticity, English as a foreign language, Turkish as a foreign language, coursebook*

ÖZET

Metin ve görev özgünlüğünün yabancı dil öğretimi araç tasarımında önemli olduğu bilinmektedir. Daha fazla özgünlük içeren okuma metinleri ile bu metinlere bağlı görevlerin sınıfta daha iyi öğrenme fırsatları sağladığı ve sınıf dışı dil kullanımı konusunda öğrencilerin daha iyi hazırlanmasını sağladığı konusunda kısmi görüş birliği söz konusudur. Okuma metni ve görev özgünlüğünün öneminin bilincinde olarak, bu çalışmada iki ders kitabının metin özgünlüğü ve anlama soruları odağı açısından incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Yabancı dil olarak İngilizce ders kitabı English File Elementary Student's Book (EF) ile Yabancı dil olarak Türkçe ders kitabı Pratik Türkçe. Practical Turkish Self-study and Classroom Use with Grammar References (PT) çözümlenmiştir. Bulgular, özgün olmayan, yarı özgün ve özgün okuma metinlerinin EF'te daha dengeli bir dağılım gösterirken PT'de yer alan okuma metinlerinin tamamına yakınının özgün olmayan metinlerden oluştuğunu ortaya çıkarmıştır. Ayrıca, PT'nin daha çok düz kavrayış sorularına dayalı olduğu, EF'nin ise öğrencilerin çıkarımda bulunması ya da içeriği kişisel bakış açısıyla değerlendirmesini sağlayarak üst düzey düşünmeyi harekete geçiren çok daha çeşitli anlama sorularını içerdiği anlaşılmaktadır. Yabancı dil öğreniminde araç tasarımı konusunda sonuçlara ulaşılmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Metin özgünlüğü, görev özgünlüğü, Yabancı dil olarak İngilizce, Yabancı dil olarak Türkçe, ders kitabı*

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is a purposeful, interactive process in which readers relate text information to existing schemata and expectations in order to make sense of the text (Grabe, 2009; Nuttall, 1996). Different from reading in the first language (L1), reading in a second or foreign language (L2) is constrained by the linguistic disadvantage L2 readers have as they – compared to L1 readers – have limited vocabulary, relatively less developed grammatical intuition and restricted cultural knowledge (Grabe & Stoller, 2001); these factors cause problems in comprehension, often at the basic level of literal comprehension (Day & Park, 2005). Several implications arise from these constraints for the teaching and learning to read in L2. Given that reading instruction in the L2 classroom has to consider both the nature of reading and the situation of the L2 learner, text and task authenticity are among those areas that teachers and material developers have to take into consideration to enhance effectiveness in reading instruction in the L2 classroom.

With an awareness of remarkable differences in definitions available in the related literature, authentic texts are those texts that are not composed for the purpose of language teaching and therefore include 'real' language while non-authentic texts are intentionally composed for language learning (Buendgens-Kosten, 2014; Gilmore, 2007). Task authenticity is concerned with the learning activities a reading text (as well as any other language material used in L2 teaching and learning) is embedded in. Following Swain's (1985, as cited in Guariento and Morley, 2001, p. 349) definition of pedagogic task as a means of providing learners with opportunities for production, Guariento and Morley (2001) identify four factors essential for task authenticity: (1) a genuine purpose that generates real communication, (2) a relation to real-world targets, (3) classroom interaction and (4) engagement, i.e. learners perceive the material and the task relevant for their own learning. In the foreign language classroom, reading tasks are most often conducted by means of comprehension questions.

From the above it is clear that tasks encompass a wide spectrum of instructional activities including comprehension questions. The focus of comprehension questions ranges from assessing literal comprehension, i.e. aiming at an understanding of what is explicitly stated to evaluation of and reflection on what is proposed in the text (Nation, 2009). From the perspective of task authenticity, questions aiming at literal comprehension lack authenticity while questions including evaluation and reflection reach authenticity to a high degree. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001) appreciates the significance of degree of text authenticity (ibid., pp. 145f., 165) and focus of comprehensions (task difficulty)

(ibid., pp. 159f.) for language learning or teaching. I will deal with reading text authenticity and reading comprehensions in turn.

1.1. Reading text authenticity

The demand for implementing authentic texts in the foreign language classroom is the result of a shift in the understanding of what teaching material should be like and for what purpose it should be used in the classroom: since the rise of Communicative Language Teaching it has been claimed that the language used in the instructional settings should be a model of the language used in the real world and material should be compatible with techniques used in Communicative Language Teaching (Gilmore, 2007; Widdowson, 1990). Accordingly, the use of authentic texts has been postulated, i.e. virtually all kinds of texts found in the real world are considered to be applicable in the foreign language classroom, such as material coming from newspapers and magazines, books, comics, the Internet (e.g. blogs), or realia, e.g. menus, invitations or postcards to name but a few.

Several advantages of authentic texts have been noted, which are here presented as three overlapping categories: (1) the language used in authentic texts, (2) their enhanced instructional versatility, and (3) their positive effects on learner motivation.

First, authentic texts expose learners to language they are likely to face outside the classroom. Authentic texts contain natural language, which is linguistically richer and displays a greater variety of language styles than the 'bookish' of coursebook texts designed with language teaching intent (Berardo, 2006). As, by nature, authentic material covers a wide range of text types and genres, authentic texts are more likely to provide opportunities to introduce the cultural background of the target language (Tamo, 2009; Berardo, 2006). Given that exposure to linguistic input is an essential facilitator of L2 acquisition (Krashen, 1985; Saville-Troike, 2006), exposure to authentic reading material provides learners with high-quality input and has the potential to generate opportunities for more effective language learning.

Second, the use of authentic material allows presenting a wide variety of text types that can be used to teach different reading subskills (such as skimming and scanning, guessing words from the context) (Tamo, 2009). More important, authentic texts can more easily be integrated in communicative tasks as they are taken from communicative real-life situations. A menu, for example can be used to conduct a role play taking place in a restaurant. Consequently, text authenticity promotes task authenticity in the foreign language classroom as it provides the opportunity to take up a task with a genuine purpose matching a real world target (Guariento & Morley, 2001).

Third, by exposing learners to authentic texts, contemporary, real-world related topics are covered, and it is assumed that these are compelling for learners. Different from non-authentic coursebook texts, authentic texts primarily aim to convey a message rather than focus on a target structure so that incidental learning is promoted. Additionally, when learners see that they can deal successfully with authentic material, they gain a sense of achievement. All these factors are believed to exert a motivating force of authentic texts on learners (Tamo, 2009).

The inclusion of authentic texts has, however, not remained without objection. First, due to its linguistically more challenging level, authentic material may exert a demotivating effect on learners who have problems in decoding texts. The difficulty is further enhanced through the cultural bias authentic material is characterized by: if the learners' knowledge of the cultural background is insufficient, authentic texts can be perceived inappropriate by learners and teachers (Berardo, 2006). Also, teachers may need time-consuming preparation when they decide to use authentic texts; this may include the modification of texts (simplification of language) or the development of suitable tasks (e.g. pre-reading, while-reading or post-reading questions) in order to improve learners' comprehension (ibid.). Modification of texts through simplification may actually make the text unnatural and more difficult because the number of linguistic cues is reduced (Gilmore, 2007). These concerns indicate that the implementation of authentic material in the L2 classroom requires appropriate choice and prudential introduction (Clavel-Arroitia & Fuster-Marquez, 2014; Lee, 1995). What is more, the difficulty of authentic material may put native speaker teachers in a favourable position as they are regarded more competent in dealing with authentic material leading, thus, to disregard of non-native speaker teachers (Buendgens-Kosten, 2014). Furthermore, Gilmore (2007), evaluating the related literature on learner motivation and authenticity, remarks that motivating effects of authentic material in a specific group of learners may not be assessed in another group because the motivational effectivity depends on the appropriateness of the authentic material and task for a specific learner group. Additionally, authentic material and tasks may appear irrelevant to learners in foreign language contexts (i.e. where the environmental language is not the target language) and actually exert

"culturally alienating" effects (Prodromou ,1988, p. 80) when learners are engaged in situations they regard unlikely to face. Finally, learners can perceive authentic material as non-authentic in the foreign language classroom, which is an authentic area in itself (Breen, 1985 as cited in Buendgens-Kosten, 2014, p. 458). Accordingly, intentionally prepared classroom material and "activities often associated with a focus on form (such as repetition, rote learning, and structural analysis and manipulation) *can* take on personal and social significance, and both draw attention to the language and be 'interesting and relevant'" (Cook, 2000, p. 172, emphasis in the original), i.e. non-authentic material can be perceived as authentic when learners and teachers recognize that it serves the pedagogical aim of facilitating language learning.

An important issue needs to be stressed regarding text authenticity. The distinction between authentic and non-authentic texts is not dichotomous. As mentioned above, authentic texts can be adapted or texts intentionally written for teaching purposes can be designed in a way that they resemble authentic texts to compensate for the disadvantages of both kinds of texts (Berardo, 2006). Thus, authenticity is a gradable term. Looking at the debate over authenticity, one can get the impression that material developers have to decide between either authentic or intentionally prepared material. However, a prudent approach seems preferable in which non-authentic material is regarded as

useful for presenting specific language items economically and effectively: the course designer has total control over the input, and can provide just the linguistic elements and contextual back-up he or she wishes, no more and no less. Authentic material, on the other hand, gives students a taste of 'real' language in use, and provides them with valid linguistic data for their unconscious acquisition processes to work on. If students are exposed only to scripted material [i.e. non-authentic material], they will learn an impoverished version of the language, and will find it hard to come terms with genuine discourse when they are exposed to it. If they are exposed only to authentic material, however, they are unlikely (in the time available for the average language course) to meet all the high-frequency items they need to learn. And elementary students, faced with authentic material that is not very carefully chosen, may find it so difficult that they get bogged down in a morass of unfamiliar lexis and idiom (Swan, 1985, p. 85).

1.2. Comprehension questions for reading texts

Comprehension questions for reading texts are a further key issue in the teaching and learning of reading. Following a change in the understanding of reading that is now distant from models explaining reading as mainly receptive and emphasizes the nature of reading as an interactive process between reader and text, the importance of using comprehension questions that facilitate the learners' active engagement with the text has been recognized (Day & Park, 2005). Consequently, questions that trigger learners' high-order thinking processes (analysis, synthesis, evaluation) are more likely to generate opportunities for active learner engagement and more effective reading comprehension (Baha & Daut, 2013, pp. 340f.). This shift in the understanding of comprehension questions is surely an outcome of the recognized significance of tasks in the foreign language classroom. Three exemplary typologies of reading comprehension questions proposed in the literature are presented here to illustrate the range comprehension reading questions encompass.

Day and Park (2005) have proposed six types of reading comprehension questions which gradually increase the requirement of high-order thinking: They distinguish between

- literal comprehension: checking comprehension of "the basic or surface meaning of the text" (ibid., p. 62);
- reorganization: combination of specific information from various parts of the text;
- inference: comprehension of information not explicitly stated;
- prediction: while-reading and post-reading prediction based on information in the text (pre-reading prediction is not a form of reading comprehension);
- evaluation: giving an evaluation about the text using both text information and own schemata;
- personal response: reacting to a text based on the readers' feelings.

Nation (2009) classifies comprehension questions by distinguishing four foci:

- literal comprehension: involving "understanding what the text explicitly says" (ibid., p. 34);
- drawing inference: comprehension of information not explicitly stated;

- using the text for other purposes in addition to understanding: this includes, e.g., applying ideas for problem-solving, bringing the text in the reader's personal experience; comparing the text with ideas outside the text;
- responding critically: giving an evaluation of the text, expressing agreement/disagreement, satisfaction/dissatisfaction.

More recently, Dagostino, Carifio, Bauer, Zhao and Hashim (2014) proposed a reading comprehension instrument consisting of three categories covering defined reading skills:

- literal: identifying the text message, i.e. meaning of words, phrases, sentences, main ideas, cause-effect and sequence of ideas; making comparisons;
- inferential: interpreting the identified message in the category 'literal'
- critical/creative: evaluation of the text message (conclusion; identifying the moral dimension of the text).

All typologies proposed here indicate that language learners as the responders to comprehension questions move in a continuum ranging from answering without personal involvement at the one end to responding from a personal perspective at the other: answers given at the level *literal* will not differ among responders while those at the level *personal/critical/evaluative* will remarkably do.

1.3. The relation between text authenticity and focus of comprehension questions

The survey so far suggests that both text authenticity and task authenticity are interwoven and resemble each other as they are gradable and express distance or proximity to language use in the real world. This relationship is illustrated in Figure 1.
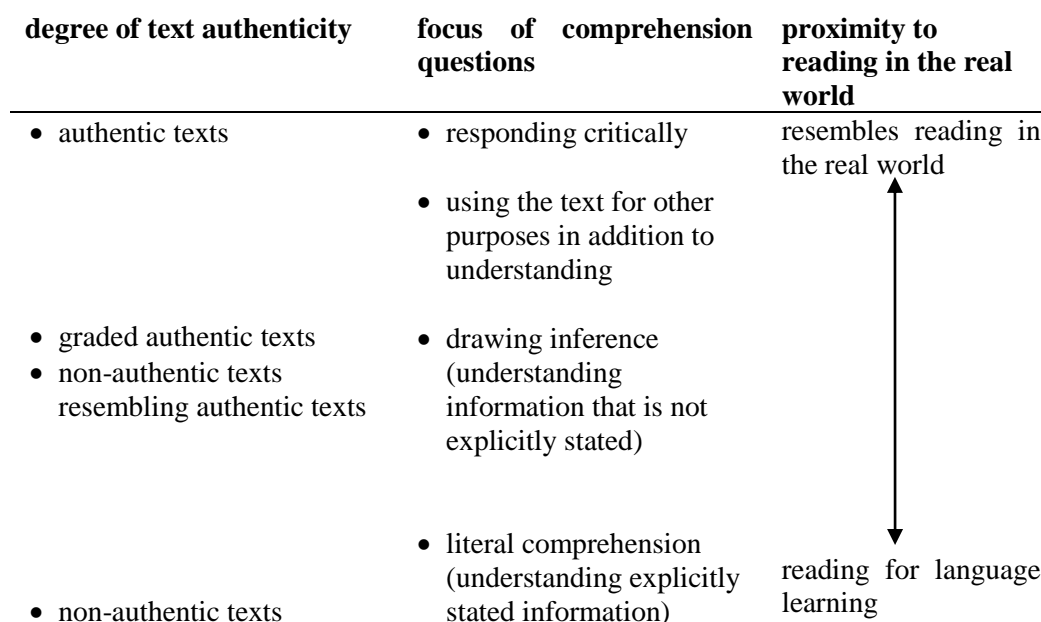
degree of text authenticity	focus of comprehension questions	proximity to reading in the real world
• authentic texts	• responding critically • using the text for other purposes in addition to understanding	resembles reading in the real world
• graded authentic texts • non-authentic texts resembling authentic texts	• drawing inference (understanding information that is not explicitly stated)	
• non-authentic texts	• literal comprehension (understanding explicitly stated information)	reading for language learning

Figure 1. Text Authenticity and Focus of Comprehension Questions in Relation to Proximity to Reading in the Real World

As shown in Figure 1, reading resembling real-world reading is a purposeful act because the reader draws inference, predicts, evaluates or responds to the text in a personal way. In other words, the reader makes his or her own sense of the text. Of course, reading in the real world also includes literal comprehension. However, this is an automatic process of the literate L1 reader, while it is not a matter of course for the L2 learner (Grabe, 2009). Similarly, authentic texts belong to the reading outside the classroom (reasonably all texts in the world outside the classroom are authentic), while reading of non-authentic texts is preserved for reading for language

learning; non-authentic texts resembling authentic texts or graded authentic texts are intermediate forms bridging the two poles.

Concerning text difficulty and difficulty of comprehension question focus, no distinction can be given. A non-authentic text prepared at intermediate level is obviously more challenging than an authentic registration form asking the learner to identify or provide personal information such as name, age and address. Also, a catalogue of multiple choice questions testing understanding of literal meaning and ability to interfere can be more difficult than having learners at Elementary level act out a role play in a supermarket with a shopping list. To sum up, "considerations of authenticity bear little consideration to their degree of difficulty. Very simple pedagogic tasks used with low-level students can still be described as authentic" (Guariento & Morley, 2001, p. 352).

The observation that text and task authenticity cannot be easily equated with text or task difficulty is also supported by the descriptors of the Common Reference Levels of the CEFR. A learner at level A1, for instance, is supposed to be able to identify information occurring in posters or catalogues, and a learner at level A2 to "find specific, predictable information in *simple everyday material* such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 26; emphasis added) as well as to use information identified in these kinds of authentic texts to engage in real-world tasks, such as "locat[ing] specific information in lists and isolat[ing] the information required (e.g. use the 'Yellow Pages' to find a service or tradesman)" (ibid., p. 70). It is the linguistic and cognitive difficulty that distinguishes reading texts and related tasks at different reference levels and not necessarily the degree of text and task authenticity.

1.4. Scope and aim of this study

As texts in L2 course books are embedded in an instructional design, they do not appear without tasks. This means that text and task interact as factors facilitating L2 learning by balancing challenge and support (Gilmore, 2007, p. 111f.). Thus, ideally, a coursebook to be used in the foreign language classroom provides a mix of authentic, semi-authentic and non-authentic texts (Clavel-Arroita & Fuster-Marquez, 2014), and a variety of comprehension question foci aiming at addressing individual differences of learners, such as competences, strategies and affective factors (Council of Europe, 2001, pp. 158-166).

Starting from this consideration, this study attempted to analyse and compare two coursebooks in terms of text authenticity and focus of comprehension questions in reading texts. The study analysed the reading texts in the English as a foreign language (EFL) coursebook *English File Elementary* (Latham-Koenig, Oxenden & Seligson, 2012) (henceforth EF) and the Turkish as a foreign language (TFL) coursebook *Pratik Türkçe. Practical Turkish. Self-study and Classroom Use with Grammar References* (Tüm & Page, 2015) (henceforth PT). While the former one is an example of a well-established coursebook, the latter one is rather a new coursebook. Moreover English language teaching is a discipline with a large corpus of research, while Turkish language teaching is quite a young research discipline (Bayraktar, 2003) recently showing a growing interest in coursebook evaluation from different aspects (e.g. Dürer, 2015; Tüm & Uğuz, 2014; Duman, 2013; Tosun, 2013; Göçer, 2007). Apart from a general introduction to text authenticity in L2 learning (Şaraplı 2011) and a study on the authenticity of dialogues in Turkish textbooks (Yağız, 2009), authenticity has not been researched with respect to TFL to the best of my knowledge. Therefore, the current study aimed to contribute to this issue by providing a comparative study on text authenticity and comprehension question focus in two coursebooks, which would allow drawing conclusions for the improvement of teaching material for both English language teaching and Turkish language teaching.

The study sought to answer the following research questions:
1. What is the distribution of authentic, semi-authentic and non-authentic reading texts in EF and PT?
2. What is the distribution of reading comprehension question foci in EF and PT?
3. What is the distribution of reading comprehension question foci in EF and PT according to text authenticity categories?

2. METHODOLOGY

The following sections provide a brief introduction of the coursebooks examined in this study and the analytical procedures followed to answer the research questions.

2.1 Coursebooks

The coursebooks analyzed in this study were *Elementary Student's Book* (EF) and *Practical Turkish Self-study and Classroom Use with Grammar References* (PT). Both books are explicitly mapped to the CEFR and cover the Common Reference Levels A1 and A2 of the framework (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 22-25). The books are designed for a general L2 course, i.e. they are not designed for specific purposes and cover all four language skills.

EF contains 12 units (called *Files*) each including three sub-units. At the end of each unit there is a section called *Practical English* (in odd numbered units) or *Revise and Check* (in even numbered units). At the end of the book, there is a section with communicative activities related to the units (*Communication*), a writing section, transcripts of the listening recordings, two sections called *Grammar Bank* and *Vocabulary Bank* as well as a list of irregular verbs and a sound bank.

PT has 10 units containing two subsections called *Lessons* (*1. Ders; 2. Ders*) in the first unit and then three subsections in the following units. The units contain mini-exams (*mini sınav*), a separate section called *Alıştırmalar* (exercises), and at the end of each unit a page called *Turkish Culture* giving information about cultural topics dealt with in the unit; these pages are in English, and throughout the book all rubrics are given in both Turkish and English. At the end of the book, there is an answer key for the mini exams, a reference for Turkish grammar and a list with Turkish proper names.

2.2. Analysis

In order to answer the research questions, the books were analyzed through identification, categorization and establishing of frequencies of reading texts and comprehension foci by the author of this study. The development of the data collection tools and procedures was guided by the intention to address potential threats to validity and reliability. Detailed accounts for the analytical procedures adopted are given in the following sections.

2.2.1. Identification and classification of reading texts

The reading texts in both books (labelled as *Reading* in EF and *Okuma* in PT) were identified. Additionally, the reading texts in EF in the sections *Revise and Check*, *Practical English* and *Communication* were analyzed. In PT, reading texts in *Alıştırmalar* were also included in the analysis. All other reading texts (e.g. used in sections labelled *Grammar* or *Writing*) were not included because they were not indicated as explicitly aiming to teach the skill of reading.

Considering Gilmore's (2007) observation that different studies actually use different or even unclear categorizations for authentic material, in this study a strict distinction was chosen. For the categorization of the reading texts, the classification given in the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, pp. 145f.) was adapted. Accordingly, three degrees of text authenticity were distinguished in the current study:

- authentic texts (untreated texts): these were texts that were unambiguously indicated as taken from a source cited;
- semi-authentic texts (graded authentic texts/non-authentic texts resembling authentic texts): these were texts that were either indicated as taken from another source (e.g. through *adapted from*) or texts that indicated proximity to authenticity through linguistic (e.g. *we interviewed the famous pop star for our magazine*) or extra-linguistic features (e.g. typical design of a menu);
- non-authentic texts (specially composed for use in language teaching): all other texts were classified under this category. This means, a text that was given a specific design through, for example, font colour, frame or illustration, but lacked the properties of semi-authentic texts or authentic texts as described above was classified as non-authentic.

The decision to use this classification was driven by concerns over validity and reliability: the categorization was not only applied since the CEFR was accepted as a valid guideline for key aspects of foreign language teaching and learning, but it was also assumed that the categorization correlated with the theorized construct of text authenticity as explicated in the section 1.1 of this paper. Accordingly, its use would minimize the danger of researcher bias, i.e. of violating research validity through letting the researcher's predispositions and perspectives affect instrumentation design, analysis procedures and drawing of conclusions (Johnson, 1997; cf. Chenail, 2011). The same concern was considered by the selection of a classification system for the analysis of comprehension question focus (see below). Finally, the restriction to three categories aimed to enhance intra-rater reliability because the categories were independent and mutually exclusive (Stemler, 2001).

For the classification procedure, an analysis scheme was designed by the researcher (Appendix A), which allowed to assign the reading texts unambiguously to one of the authenticity categories, and to count frequency (columns left hand). If a text was separated in different interrelated parts, it was counted as one text.

2.2.2. Classification of comprehension question foci

The comprehension questions belonging to the reading texts were identified and classified according to the categorization by Nation (2009, p. 34) (cf. section 1.2). This means the instrument was informed by the relevant literature to achieve validity by matching the categories to underlying theoretical conceptions of comprehension question focus. The decision to adapt the categorization established by Nation was driven by the fact that it contained *using the text for additional purposes in addition to understanding* as a separate category, which was not covered in other schemes. A preliminary examination of the coursebooks had revealed that questions referring to this category were used. The categories were labelled as follows:

- evaluating;
- using for additional purposes (shortened to 'additional use' in the section showing the results of this paper);
- drawing inference;
- literal comprehension.

A detailed descriptor for the categories is given in Appendix B. The descriptor, which made use of the descriptor given by Nation (ibid.), served as a tool to establish intra-rater reliability by establishing unambiguous, non-overlapping categories to be used for the data analysis (Stemler, 2001)

For the analysis, the analysis scheme shown in Appendix A was used (columns right hand). For each text, comprehension question foci were identified and counted. When a text had more than one comprehension question with different foci, or more than one section with comprehension questions with different foci, each focus of comprehension question identified was counted separately. Pre-reading questions were not included in the analysis.

3. RESULTS

In the following sections, the results are presented within three themes. First, the distribution of reading texts relating to degrees of authenticity is shown. Then, the distribution of comprehension question foci is given. Finally, comprehension question focus is related text authenticity to compare the coursebooks under examination.

3.1. Reading text distribution

In EF, 36 reading texts were identified, in TP 46. It was remarkable that five of the texts indicated as reading texts in PT were dialogues, while that was only once the case in EF. Also, a table consisting of numbers written in words and as figures was marked as reading text (PT, p. 28). Comparable items were not marked as reading texts in EF.

The determination of the distribution of texts according to degree of authenticity was one aim of this study. Figure 2 shows the distribution of authentic, semi-authentic and non-authentic texts in EF.
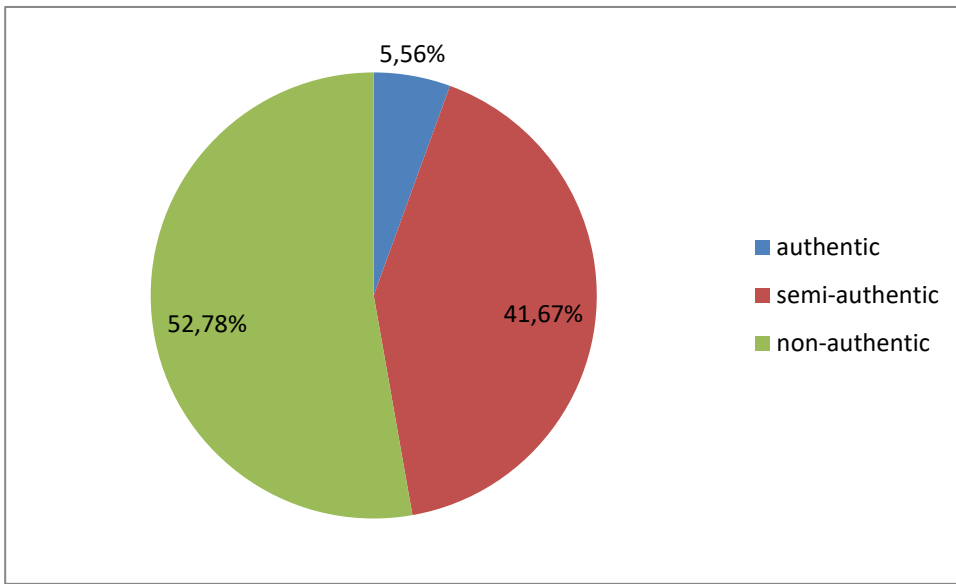
Figure 2. Distribution of Authentic, Semi-authentic and Non-authentic Texts in EF

As Figure 2 shows, more than half of the reading texts (19) were non-authentic. The second biggest group was semi-authentic texts (15), while only two texts were authentic. There was one article taken from a newspaper (p. 51), and an interview with an actor that was intentionally made to be published in the coursebook (p. 96), and - being an original work - counted as authentic.

The distribution of authentic, semi-authentic and non-authentic texts in PT is illustrated in Figure 3.
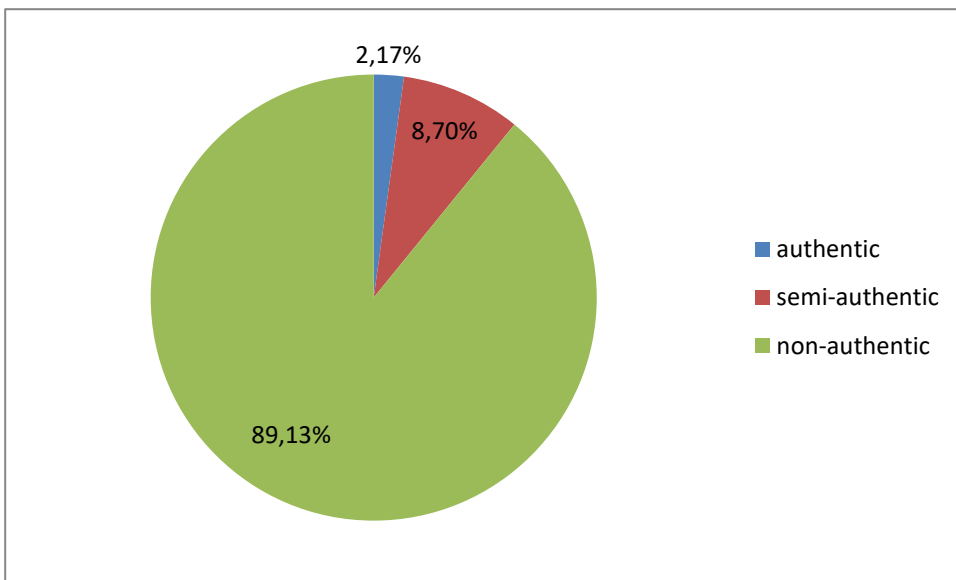

Figure 3. Distribution of Authentic, Semi-authentic and Non-authentic Texts in PT

As seen in Figure 3, by far the most texts were non authentic (41), while only four texts were semi-authentic and one text, a wedding invitation (p. 223) was authentic[1]. A further inspection of the texts in both coursebooks revealed that the texts categorized as non-authentic in EF exhibited a wide variety of layouts, so that they could

have been categorized as semi-authentic by a less strict delineation of the categories established. Different from EF, the great majority of the reading texts in PT were presented in exactly the same design (typeface, font size and font colour).

3.2. Distribution of comprehension question foci

Table 1 shows the number of comprehension question foci for EF and PT. As reading texts often had questions with more than one kind of focus, the number of foci exceeds the number of reading texts.

Table 1. Distribution of Comprehension Question Foci in EF and PT

Coursebooks	Comprehension Question Foci											
	Literal Meaning		Drawing Inference		Additional Use		Evaluating		No Focus		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
EF	20	29,85	29	43,28	17	25,37	1	1,49	0	0.00	67	100,00
PT	26	41,94	16	25,81	16	25,81	0	0,00	4	6,45	62	100,00

Table 1 shows that drawing inference was the most frequently applied comprehension focus in EF followed by literal meaning and using for additional purposes; both foci were used at a proportion of between 25 and 30 per cent. On the contrary, literal meaning was most frequently used in PT, and more than a quarter of the question foci were on drawing inference and additional use in the TFL coursebook. Remarkably, in four cases no focus was given, instead the rubric *Read the dialogue below* was provided (pp. 19, 28, 46 and 47). Apparently, these dialogues were indeed presented as introduction to speaking activities. However, as they were indicated as reading activities, they were included in the analysis.

3.3. Distribution of comprehension question foci according to text authenticity category

The data was also analysed in order to find out which question focus was used for which authenticity degree (non-authentic, semi-authentic and authentic). The results are shown separately for each coursebook in Figure 4.
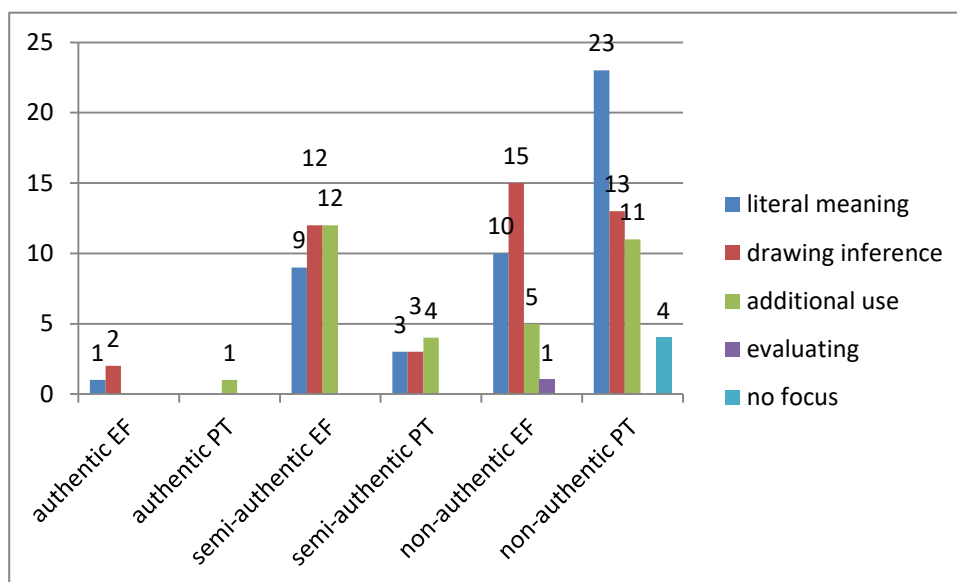

Figure 4. Distribution of Comprehension Question Focus in Authentic, Semi-authentic and Non-authentic Texts in EF and PT

Figure 4 shows that in each text category of EF, questions requesting learners to draw inference were the most frequently used comprehension question focus (except for semi-authentic texts in which the number of questions of the foci 'drawing inference' and 'additional use' were equal). In contrast, in non-authentic texts in PT, by far the most frequently used text category, questions aiming at literal comprehension dominated. In the TFL coursebook, questions belonging to the category 'additional use' were used most frequently in semi-authentic texts; however, the number of foci counted was rather low as there were only four semi-authentic texts.

A closer examination of the EFL coursebook revealed that one of the reasons for this finding was the continual use of a question type in which learners have to guess the meaning of words highlighted in the text from the context. A different approach was identified in PT: reading texts were usually accompanied by a bilingual (Turkish-English) list of new words. Furthermore, the EFL coursebook contains several examples of questions, in which learners are invited to put reading content into a personal experience.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study was to investigate the use of authentic, semi-authentic and non-authentic texts in an EFL and TFL coursebook. Additionally, the study sought to examine the use of comprehension questions in terms of focus (literal meaning, drawing inference, using for additional purposes, evaluating).

The analysis revealed remarkable differences between the coursebooks. While both coursebooks mostly used non-authentic texts, the EFL coursebook displayed a more balanced distribution because a distinct proportion of semi-authentic texts was used as well. The number of authentic texts was low in both books. While the latter finding can be related to the level (A1-A2 according to the CEFR [Council of Europe, 2001]), the preference of clearly non-authentic texts in PT indicate that the TFL coursebook has a lower level of text authenticity. This is partly conflicting with the CEFR that favours the teaching and learning of language by means of authentic material starting from low Common Reference Levels without denying the usefulness of material intentionally designed for teaching purposes (ibid., pp. 26, 146). Based on this consideration and given the reported advantages of text authenticity, EF prepares for reading texts outside the classroom in a suitable manner, is more likely to invite learners to participate in authentic tasks, and is potentially more motivating through a more appealing text selection (Tamo, 2009; Gilmore, 2007; Berardo, 2006; Guariento & Morley, 2001).

A further difference revealed in this study was the dominance of questions aiming to check literal comprehension at the expense of questions triggering higher-order thinking in PT. This preference clearly impedes learner engagement in authentic tasks (Guariento and Morley, 2001; Rivas, 1999). It can be concluded that particularly the inclusion of questions which intend to personalize reading text content in EF increases the relevance of tasks for learners. Also, both coursebooks differed strikingly through the continual use of bilingual (Turkish-English) lists of new words attached to reading texts in PT on the one hand, and the continual use of questions asking learners to guess the meanings of words in a reading text in EF on the other hand. Even though the inclusion of L1 in teaching and learning L2 has been advocated convincingly (e.g. Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2009; Cook, 2010), the approach followed in EF is arguably more learner-activating and fosters the important skill of guessing meaning from context in reading and vocabulary learning in L2 (Thornbury, 2002, pp. 148f.). When we recognize that bilingual word lists are normally not attached to reading texts in the world outside the classroom, this can be taken as a further indicator for reduced text authenticity. To sum up, it can be assumed that EF is a book that leaves the level of literal comprehension to the teacher and offers, instead, questions that foster critical thinking and allow learners to personalize reading content.

A final remark may be given concerning the layout: as mentioned in Section 3.1., the perception of EF being a 'more authentic' coursebook was certainly supported by the visual impression the coursebooks under investigation left. The fact that EF is visually more appealing is very probably due to the fact that EF belongs to a coursebook series that has been offered for a long time and undergone several editing processes. Also, EF is produced by a financially strong publisher that is forced to issue appealing coursebooks in a competitive environment. Finally, material designers in EFL can benefit from a greater experience than those in TFL.

The insight that experienced material designers (as, for example, of EF) provide reading text with a variety of appearances and do not overemphasize the need to insist on checking comprehension at the literal meaning level may encourage material designers in TFL or other foreign language contexts with a comparably young tradition to produce textbooks that display a greater proximity to text and task authenticity.

5. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study investigated two coursebooks, so that the results cannot be easily generalized to a wider EFL and TFL context. Also, in comparing the coursebooks, a confined domain was investigated. As I believe that research on learning material should lead to a betterment of learning materials, examination should be holistic and cover a variety of aspects.

In terms of text authenticity, this study examined reading texts under formal aspects. Investigating linguistic aspects and topics dealt with in reading texts would reveal stronger evidence for degree of authenticity (cf. studies by Siegel, 2014; Gilmore, 2004). Furthermore, getting the opinions of the actual coursebook users, i.e. learners and teachers, is inevitable to come to a sound evaluation of L2 learning and teaching material (Tosun, 2012). These considerations may serve as guidelines for further research.

Note

[1] Actually, the invitation is not marked as authentic by the coursebook authors. The author of this study, however, identifies it - relying upon his knowledge - as authentic.

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Appendix A

Analysis scheme

Coursebook:

	page/text	text authenticity			comprehension question focus			
		authentic	semi-authentic	non-authentic	literal	inference	additional use	evaluating
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								
5.								
6.								
7.								
8.								
9.								
10.								
11.								
12.								
13.								
14.								
15.								
16.								
17.								
18.								
19.								
20.								
	TOTAL							

Appendix B

Descriptor of Categories for Focus of Comprehension Questions (cf. Nation, 2009, p. 34)

(The descriptor is mainly guided by the scheme given by Nation; slight modifications [labels and content] were made as a result of the analysis in this study).

Label	Descriptor
literal comprehension	• understanding what the text explicitly says
drawing inference	• understanding what is not explicitly stated but could be justified by reference to the text • working out the main idea • recognizing text organization • determining the writer's attitude • interpreting characters • working out cause, effect, and other conjunction relationships not explicitly stated • working out the meaning of unknown words or phrases • making predictions based on text cues
using for additional purposes	• applying ideas from the text to solve problems • applying ideas from the text to personal experience • comparing ideas from the text with ideas from outside the text • imagining extensions of the text • fitting ideas in the text into wider field as in a review of literature • text leading into follow-up activity (e.g. listening activity, role play) • responding to the text through language production (e.g. writing a letter to the writer; writing a similar text about the topic; holding a speech using ideas from the text)
evaluating	• considering the quality of the evidence in the text • evaluating the adequacy of the content of the text • evaluating the quality of expression and clarity of language of the text • expressing agreement or disagreement with the ideas in the text • expressing satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the text

SUMMARY

There is general agreement that texts and tasks used in foreign language instruction exhibiting a higher degree of authenticity have the potential to provide better learning opportunities in the classroom and prepare learners more adequately for language use outside the classroom. Acknowledging the significance of text and task authenticity, this study examined two coursebooks - coming from different foreign language teaching contexts drawing on unequal amounts of research and experience - in terms of reading text authenticity and comprehension question focus. The books analyzed were the English as a foreign language (EFL) coursebook English File Elementary Student's Book (EF) and the Turkish as a foreign language (TFL) coursebook Pratik Türkçe. Practical Turkish. Self-study and Classroom Use with Grammar References (PT). To identify text authenticity three degrees of text authenticity (authentic texts, semi-authentic texts and non-authentic texts) were distinguished following a categorization proposed in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001, pp. 145f.). To analyse task authenticity in reading comprehension questions a categorization established by Nation (2009, p. 34) was adapted for the current study. The instrument design in this study was guided by the aim to develop instruments that are based on the theorized constructs of text and task authenticity and rely on mutually exclusive categories in data analysis in order to gain valid and reliable results. The results of the study revealed that PT nearly exclusively used non-authentic texts, while the proportion of non-authentic, semi-authentic and authentic texts was more balanced in EF. Furthermore, PT relied more strongly upon questions checking literal comprehension, while EF displayed a greater variety of comprehension question foci with an emphasis on questions triggering high-order thinking engaging learners in drawing inference or putting content into a personal perspective. The results suggest that EF is more appealing and compelling as it potentially engages learners more deeply in material and tasks related to situations foreign language learners face in the target culture. Therefore, EF is far more in line with the specifications drafted in the CEFR than PT. The example of EF, a worldwide used coursebook in English language teaching benefitting from– compared to Turkish language teaching – a greater experience in material design, may encourage material designers involved in foreign language contexts with comparably younger traditions to produce material displaying a greater variety and higher degree of text and task authenticity.