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The effect of authentic materials on 12th grade students' attitudes in EFL Classes

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Abstract

This study was designed to investigate whether authentic materials have a positive impact on developing the attitudes of 12th grade students in EFL classes. This study was conducted over 12 weeks. The participants were 37 twelfth grade students in Bucak Anatolian High School. In order to accomplish the objectives of the study, quantitative research method was applied. In this experimental study, pre-test – post-test with a control group design was used. An experimental and a control group participated and the instrument of the study was an attitude scale. During the ten week training program, the experimental group received suggested activities and exercises using authentic materials such as films, videos, magazines whereas the control group received the traditional instructional approach using the current course book while focusing on almost the same language items. Both groups were administered the pre-tests at the beginning of the training, and the post-tests at the end of the training in order to analyze the students' attitudes towards English course before and after the implementation of authentic materials. The data collected through the students' pre and post-tests were analyzed using Microsoft Office, Excel 2003 and SPSS 13.00. Descriptive statistics and independent-samples t-test were used in the analysis of quantitative data. Based on the quantitative research findings, it can be stated that although pre-test results indicated no significant difference between the means of the experimental and the control group, the means of the experimental group was found to be significantly higher than the control group according to post-test results. In conclusion, it can be said that authentic materials have marked a positive effect on the attitudes of students towards English course.

Keywords: Authentic materials, foreign language teaching, attitude

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Introduction

Teaching a language is a process which is indefinite and difficult to deal effectively especially when the language is taught as a foreign language where the students have little chance to use the target language outside the classrooms. Success in learning a language depends on a variety of factors such as the qualification of the teacher, the appropriateness of the teaching approach, the quality of the course materials, the duration and intensity of the language course, and the characteristics of the language learner. Teachers and educators shouldn't forget that students are human, with likes, dislikes and moods. In the field of language learning, the attitudes of the learner towards the target language is important because it implies whether somebody will be successful in the target language or not.

According to Crystal (1997, p. 215), attitude towards language is the attitude which speakers of different languages have towards each other's languages or to their own language. It is important, as Krashen (1985) proposes, attitudes can act as barriers or bridges to learning a new language and are the essential environmental ingredient for language learning. Chambers (1999) asserts that learning occurs more easily, when the learner has a positive attitude towards the language and learning.

One of the key roles of the teacher in language learning process is observing his/her students' motivation and attitude. S/he needs to check the students' readiness and willingness in order to facilitate learning. S/he should provide appropriate conditions in the class and follow effective methods and modern techniques of language teaching. The Ministry of National Education in Turkey, now depends on a "Constructivist" approach. The use of the "Constructivist" curriculum should be learner-centred and involve self assessment activities. The curriculum in Turkey shares a common aim and focus with the CEF which is a desire to raise standards by focusing on students' ability to acquire and apply knowledge in education systems (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2011).

Foreign language teachers are in effort to guide students to be autonomous, which is suggested by the latest learning/teaching approaches especially CLT and learner-centered approach. Instead of making students autonomous learners, high schools in Turkey only prepare students to pass the nationwide examination called *University Entrance Examination*. English is a compulsory lesson in high school curriculum in Turkey. However, English lesson doesn't take place in the examination. High school students especially 12th graders have negative attitudes towards English, and come to class with low motivation because English is the least important lesson for their goals. The more the students get closer to the University Entrance Examination, the more they become demotivated in English courses. The students reject to join the lessons or deal with any tasks presented to them. They can not take advantage of learning a foreign language and use it in their professional lives.

One way of helping our students to overcome their negative attitudes and provide them a reason to learn English is to interact with real language and real speakers of that language, with authentic materials. Communicative language teaching and constructivism also support the use of these materials. Communicative language teaching and the theories of constructivism paved the way for authentic materials focusing on representing the real world. According to constructivist approach, learning situations, skills, and tasks must represent the real world. An

authentic classroom atmosphere can motivate students to take control over their own learning, thus encouraging a move toward learner autonomy. Communicative approach has brought a need to develop students' skills for the real world to language teaching since the mid 1970s (Widdowson, 1979). Teachers should "simulate" real-world situations in the classroom by using authentic materials in instructions.

Authentic materials that have been produced for native speakers of that country have the potential to engage the learners cognitively and affectively. They are enjoyable and therefore motivating and allow learners to feel that they are not really involved in a serious language learning activity. The interest in the use of authentic materials for language teaching developed during the late 1970s under the influence of applied linguists such as Widdowson (1978) and Breen (1985). Authentic materials not only bring learners closer to the target language culture but also affect students' attitude and motivation. There have been many studies into the methodology and effects of using authentic texts and materials on EFL/ESL learners (Gilmore, 2007; Herron & Seay, 1991; Kim, 2000; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003; McCoy, 2009; Morrison, 1989; Morton, 1999; Peacock, 1997; Sun, 2010; Swaffar, 1985; Zhu, 1984). These ELT professionals have experimented with practical methods to teach English courses with authentic texts of various types and levels and they show overall positive outcomes both with respect to motivating learners in learning the target language and in terms of developing in them communicative competence.

The authors who support the use of authentic material have in common one idea: "exposure". (Dörnyei, 2002; Mantle-Bromley, 1995; Saracaloğlu, 2000; Sun, 2010). In other words, the benefit students get from being exposed to the language in authentic materials. They are in a consensus that the use of authentic materials in the classroom is beneficial to the learning process by taking our students beyond the borders of the textbooks which are incapable of bringing the real English-language world to our students. As a result, in order to provide a positive attitude towards foreign language learning, authentic material use is strongly advised by many language researchers. (Kim, 2000; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003; McCoy, 2009; Morrison, 1989; Morton, 1999; Peacock, 1997; Sun, 2010). Regarding student progress and attitudes, teachers need to be aware of the relation between materials and students' attitude. The use of correct materials and correct methodology will have a more positive influence on students' attitude which will lead to higher achievement. The current research focuses on eliciting learners' attitudes regarding the use of authentic materials in English classes in order to provide pedagogical implications to improve the current situation.

Methodology

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to discover whether it is possible to enhance students' attitudes towards English through the use of authentic materials and to identify the diversities in students' attitude levels before they start and after they use authentic materials in EFL classes by means of attitude scale. Based on the purposes above, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What is the effect of authentic materials on 12th graders' attitudes in EFL classes?

2. Is there a significant difference between the experimental group students and the control group students in terms of their attitudes in EFL classes at the beginning of the study?
3. Is there a significant difference between the experimental group students and the control group students in terms of their attitudes in EFL classes at the end of the study?

Hypothesis

Under the light of the research questions which are presented above, the hypothesis formulated for this study is: The use of authentic materials in EFL classes will enhance the students' attitudes in EFL classes considerably

Method

An experimental research design incorporating quantitative instrument was used to accomplish the objectives of the study. Two general methods were used while carrying out quantitative research: true experimental and descriptive. The variables focused here include the use of authentic materials as independent and the attitude level of the participants as dependent variables. The design of this true experimental study is pre-test-post-test control-group design. Comparison of pre-test scores allows the researcher to evaluate how effective the randomisation of the sample is in providing equivalent groups. The dependent variable is measured twice during the study (before and after the manipulation of the independent variable).

The size of the samples that are the source of research data, affects the selection of statistics. Özdamar (1997: 125) suggests that in the situations where sample size is smaller than 30 ($n < 30$) t-test is used to test single sample and two sample hypotheses. Moreover, according to electronic statistics textbook, the t-test can be used even if the sample sizes are very small (e.g., as small as 10), as long as the variables are approximately normally distributed and the variation of scores in the two groups is not reliably different. (<http://www.statsoft.com/textbook/statistics-glossary/t/button/t/>) Therefore, the sample size is appropriate for the use of parametric statistics in this study.

To carry out this study, independent-samples t- tests and descriptive statistics were used to identify the difference between the groups. The entire results were compared at the "0.05" level of confidence. The data obtained from the scale were entered into the computer and the results of the students' attitudes were represented via SPSS 13.0. Descriptive statistics, such as means, medians, modes and standard deviations were used to analyze collected data in order to describe the learners' attitude levels towards English course after pre-test and post-test stages. The analyses include both the overall results and the results of each group. Microsoft Office Excel, 2003 was used for calculating statistics. Afterwards, the pre-test and post-test results of learners were compared in order to detect possible changes in the attitudes of the students.

Besides, the effect size was calculated and interpreted according to Cohen's (1988 cited in Büyükoztürk, Çokluk and Köklü, 2010) criterion. The effect size, the expected differences in the means between the control and experimental groups was expressed in standard deviation units. An effect size identifies the strength of the conclusions about group differences or the

relationships among variables in quantitative studies as Creswell (2009, p. 167) notes. The results were gathered and displayed in charts and analyzed accordingly.

Participants

This study was carried out at Bucak Anatolian High School in Bucak, Burdur. The participants of the study were thirty seven 12th grade students. Of the already existing groups, classroom 12/A was assigned as experimental, and 12/ B was assigned as control group. As 12-A had more population than 12-B, 12-A was chosen as the experimental group. There were 19 students in the experimental group and 18 students in the control group. Both groups were trained by the same teacher in order to prevent the different teacher effect on the performance of the students. The researcher selected and prepared the authentic materials, and additional activities to use in the English lessons. All materials and activities were prepared regarding the needs, interests and proficiency level of the students participating in the study. The activities were related to the subjects in the syllabus. All were supported with the present course book, *New Bridge to Success, Intermediate*.

Data Collection Instrument

Attitude Scale

Attitude Scale (see Appendix) was chosen as the instrument since it is a way to produce scores indicating the overall degree of favourability of a person's attitude on a topic. In addition it is a type of questionnaire which measures attitudes by analysing a subject's responses. Attitude Scale which was designed to elicit information about the perception of students towards English course was developed by Erdem (2007) was applied to the students in this study. During the process of developing the scale, for the analysis of validity, Principal Component Analysis and for the analysis of reliability, the Cronbach alpha values were found. During the factor analysis, items were gathered under a single dimension and it was seen that the percentage of item description was % 61.2

The attitude scale was given to both groups twice, as a pre-measure before the implementation of authentic materials and as a post-measure after the implementation of authentic materials. The results of the pre and post-measures were compared to see if there was a significant change in the experimental groups' attitudes towards English course after the implementation of authentic materials in English lessons. The instrument was found to be reliable with an alpha value of .97. The students expressed their level of agreement or disagreement on the items by means of a 5-point Likert Scale. Attitudes towards English Course Scale consisted of 14 positive (1, 2, 5, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 18, 19, 23, 24, 26, 28) , and 14 negative (3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 25, 27) total of 28 closed-ended items. Therefore the total scores ranged from 28 to 140. For the data analysis, answers of students' questionnaires were numbered as follows:

'Absolutely agree'=5 'Agree'=4 'Neutral'=3 'Disagree'=2 'Strongly Disagree'=1.

Negative items have reversed wording. The numbers on items with reversed wording should be reversed before summing the responses for the twenty eight items. For example on item 3, "Absolutely agree" becomes 1, "Agree" becomes 2, "Neutral" becomes 3, "Disagree"

becomes 4, and “Strongly disagree” becomes 5. Scoring of the positive and negative items in the Attitude Scale is shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Scoring of the Items in the Attitude Scale

Attitude	Positive Items	Negative Items
Absolutely Agree	5	1
Agree	4	2
Neutral	3	3
Disagree	2	4
Strongly Disagree	1	5

A total score of (112) or more implied that the participant had strongly positive attitudes, a total score of (57) to (111) demonstrated that the participant had moderately positive attitudes, a score of (56) and less represented that the participant embodied negative attitudes towards English lesson.

Instructional Materials

The list below shows the authentic materials implemented throughout the study.

1st week: Authentic film: Merlin, BBC TV Series,

2nd week: Authentic Short Story: The Necklace

3rd week: Realia

4th week: Advertisements

5th week: Pen pals

6th week: Authentic Magazine: TIME

7th week: Authentic Song and Video Clip: Lemon Tree by Fool's Garden

8th week: Authentic Teenage Magazine: Seventeen

Findings

The findings of the research were presented through tables and a graph. There are three parts which provide answers for the research questions of the study.

Research Question 1: What is the effect of authentic materials on 12th graders' attitudes in EFL classes?

The first research question was answered by the help of the data taken from the attitude scale by using descriptive statistics. To determine the extent of the attitudes the students had in EFL classes, the researcher calculated the highest and lowest scores that can be obtained and the means, medians, modes and standard deviations of the scores the participants had both from the pre-test and the post-test of the Attitude Scale via using Microsoft Office Excel.

Data Analysis

When the scores of the pre-tests are taken into consideration, difference between the two group students' mean scores indicated that they did not differ in their attitude levels. Experimental group pre-test score is (M= 59, SD= 10,02) control group pre-test score is (M=60,

SD= 10,65) However, when the scores of the post-tests are taken into consideration, difference between the two group students' mean scores indicated that they differed in their attitude levels. Experimental group post-test score is (M= 87, SD= 14,84) control group post-test mean score is (M= 64, SD= 10,48) The findings yielded to the conclusion that, after the implementation of authentic materials in their English lessons, experimental group learners proved to have higher attitude levels compared to that of control group learners.

Research Question 2: Is there a significant difference between the experimental group students and the control group students in terms of their attitudes in EFL classes at the beginning of the study?

Data Analysis

The levels of two classes are almost the same. The mean score of experimental group is (M= 2, 1184) and the mean of control group is (M= 2, 1528). The standard deviation is (SD =, 35795) in the experimental group and is (SD =, 38050) in the control group. This finding did not reach statistical significance, $t(35) = 2,83$, $p > 0,05$. As the data presents, there is not a remarkable difference between the experimental group and the control group in terms of subjects' attitudes in EFL classes at the beginning of the study. This result may be prominent as it clarifies that previous to instruction control group and experimental group students are equivalent in terms of their attitudes. Therefore, one was chosen as the experimental group, and the other as the control group.

Research Question 3: Is there a significant difference between the experimental group students and the control group students in terms of their attitudes in EFL classes at the end of the study?

Table 2

T-test Results of Both Group Students Regarding to Post-test Mean Scores

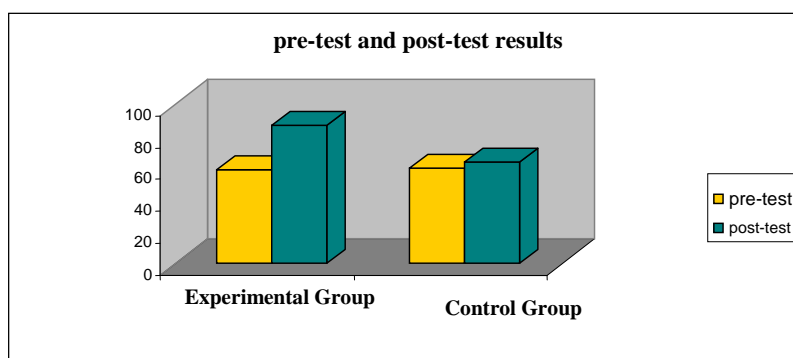
Group	Test	N	X	S.D.	df	t	p*
Experimental	Post-test	19	3,1184	,53027	35	-5,463*	,000
Control		18	2,2897	,37435			

*p<0.05

Data Analysis

When the calculations are analyzed, it can be seen that, the mean score of experimental group is (M= 3, 1184) and the mean score of control group is (M= 2, 2897). The standard deviation is (SD =, 53027) in the experimental group and is (SD =, 37435) in the control group. This finding was found to be statistically significant $t(35) = -5,463$, $p < 0,05$; $d = .460$. The effect size for this analysis ($d = .460$) was found to exceed Cohen's (1988) convention for a large effect ($d = .80$). This effect size identifies the strength of the conclusions about group differences among variables in quantitative studies as Creswell (2009: 167) notes.

This finding justifies that there is a significant difference between the experimental group and the control group in terms of subjects' attitudes in EFL classes at the end of the study. Experimental group has developed much while the control group has recorded too little development. Since there is a significant difference between the two groups, it might be proposed that authentic materials used in teaching English implemented to the experimental group enhanced the attitudes of the students in EFL classes at meaningful level of significance when compared with the control group. The graph below summarizes the results of the both pre and post-tests while illustrating the answers of three research questions.



Graph 1

Pre-test and Post-test Results

Discussions

This research aimed to investigate whether the use of authentic materials enhance the attitudes of 12th graders towards English lesson in EFL classes. There have been many studies into the methodology and effects of using authentic texts and materials on EFL/ESL learners (Zhu, 1984; Swaffar, 1985; Morrison, 1989; Herron & Seay, 1991; Peacock, 1997; Morton, 1999; Kim, 2000; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003; Gilmore, 2007; McCoy, 2009; Sun, 2010). Allwright (1990) emphasizes that materials control learning and teaching. Therefore, in many cases, materials are the centre of instruction and one of the most important influences on what goes on in the classroom. According to Little, Devitt and Singleton, (1989) the best learning results are achieved if learners work as much as possible with authentic materials which are used in the context of real-world-based situations or at least simulations and thus are supported by authentic tasks. Çakıcı (2007, p. 34) suggests that using different and appropriate supplementary materials, foreign language teachers may arouse students' interest. If the atmosphere in a language classroom is authentic and relaxing, it will enhance the learners' attitude. According to Brown (1994), it is the duty of school to help students develop positive attitude towards foreign language. The findings of this study are consistent with the current literature (Little, Devitt & Singleton 1989; Bacon & Finnemann 1990; Peacock 1997), which report the positive effects of authentic materials in ESL/EFL classes.

Conclusion

This study aimed to enhance the attitudes of the 12th grade students in EFL classes at Bucak Anatolian High School through authentic materials. To achieve this, the current course book, *New Bridge to Success, Intermediate*, for the 12th graders has been supplemented with authentic materials, additional activities, exercises and handouts prepared and adapted by the teacher, researcher herself. According to the results obtained from the attitude scale, those who were trained with authentic materials, maintained positive attitudes more than those who didn't get a similar training. The students in the experimental group did make a striking enhancement in the attitude post- test. This showed the effectiveness of using authentic materials on fostering students' attitudes in EFL classes.

The use of authentic materials in an interpreting classroom is now becoming more important because we are more conscious of the close relationship between classroom interpretation and real-life interpretation. Authentic materials can empower students with a communicative advantage, by contributing to a more relaxed learning environment. These materials also offer a good source including a wide range of reading, listening and writing materials. They can be alternatives, supplementary resources for reading and listening sources and provide students with extra writing and speaking practice. Therefore, with the findings of this study, teachers may design effective authentic material-based instruction by overcoming and minimizing the challenges students may encounter. In this way the teachers can create desire of learning and all the students participate in the lesson vividly and voluntarily. It can be concluded that, authentic materials are tools which can enhance attitude and promote motivation in EFL classes on the condition that they are used effectively both by the teachers and students. This study offers support to earlier findings that suggest the advantages of using authentic materials in improving FL learning (e.g. Herron and Seay, 1991; Peacock, 1997; Morton, 1999; Guariento & Morley, 2001; Berardo, 2006).

Finally, the ultimate goal of teaching English is to enable learners to communicate effectively to use language appropriately. To achieve this goal, we need to bring the outside world into the classroom, not to idealise it conveniently from within. In other words if the chance is given to the authentic materials, it can generate a big payback with the positive attitude and better learning opportunities for students.

The present study does not lack its own limitations. As this study only measured attitude, the researcher did not need to measure the proficiency level of the participants. Further research might use an English proficiency test to determine learners' proficiency level before the study takes place. Besides, an experimental study again may be carried out in which the effect of authentic materials on learners' language proficiency is investigated.

Implications for Teachers

It is apparent from the results of the study that the course book does not meet students' expectations and they include many things which are not motivating for the students. Therefore, teachers who use these course books and take all these factors into consideration should prepare and bring different materials to their classrooms to motivate their students during the lesson. In

this sense, the authentic materials can provide interaction for the development of language skills as well as being an opportunity to encourage practicing authentic language in a non-threatening manner.

When EFL instructors decide to use authentic materials, the materials should be appropriate to students' target language area that applied to the four basic skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and meet students' needs and interests. The more skills the authentic materials embrace, the more valuable authentic materials are. The selection of such materials should also be based on some specific criteria such as linguistic complexity, amount of information, length, speed of delivery, varieties of English accents and the objectives to be achieved. Besides, having students participate in the selection of authentic materials might be beneficial to learners.

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Web Resources

<http://www.statsoft.com/textbook/statistics-glossary/t/button/t/>

Appendix**ATTITUDE SCALE TOWARDS ENGLISH LESSON**

Name: Surname: Class: Gender: <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> M	Strongly Agree	Agree	No idea	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I would like to improve my English					
2. English is one of the most important lessons					
3. I feel unhappy and uncomfortable in English lessons					
4. Learning English doesn't take my interest					
5. Learning English is entertaining					
6. I would like to have less English lessons per week					
7. I prefer dealing with other things to spending my time with learning English					
8. Meeting with different languages and cultures in English lessons takes my interest					
9. I think learning English is useful lifelong.					
10. I look forward to English lessons					
11. My wish to study decreases when I forget the vocabularies or the sentence patterns I learned in English lesson					
12. I feel distressed when I have to talk or write in English					
13. I think communication in English is meaningless					

14. Learning English broadens the learner's point of view.					
15. I would like to have a friend whom I can talk or write in English					
16. I don't think to choose a job which requires English in the future					
17. I lose my working interest when I have a problem with English lesson					
18. I don't understand how time passes in English lesson					
19. I feel I get the abilities needed for the future in English lessons					
20. If English lesson is not obligatory, I will not spend effort to learn English					
21. I think learning English is not useful in daily life					
22. English lesson is an unnecessary lesson					
23. I like to learn new things in English lesson					
24. English is one of my favourite lessons					
25. I wouldn't like to be have to learn English					
26. I would like to take more lessons to improve my English					
27. I hate English lessons					
28. I enjoy studying English in my free time					