CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

In the last three decades, second language teaching has witnessed dramatic changes in terms of teaching methodology, curriculum design, and language assessment. One of the most salient shifts was the tendency toward adopting the communicative approach by many linguists, researchers, and practitioners. I believe its significance lay in that it brought about important notions into the field of ESL learning and teaching. Among the most important ones were the notions of the communicative competence, autonomous learning, co-operative learning and authenticity.

Although defining the notion of authenticity is a debatable issue, much of the literature emphasizes that incorporating this element in second language teaching is beneficial (Burns, 2001; Finnemann, 1990; Hall, 2001; Hedge, 2000; Swaffar, 1985; Nunan, 1988). Proponents of the notion of authenticity argue that using authentic materials, and assigning learners authentic tasks call for simulating real life in ESL classroom. Hence, they believe that using authentic materials have the potential to increase ESL learners' interests, and enhance their motivation to learn the language.

The issue of motivation for the students I teach is an important one as many of my high school students show poor attitudes towards learning English. When asked about this informally they often associate this to boring textbooks which are of no relevance or interest to them. Additionally, they maintain in many occasions that such textbooks are not sufficient, and they do not help them acquire the language they will need in the future either in academic or professional settings. Hence, I question whether or not incorporating authentic materials will arouse their interests and change their negative attitudes towards learning English.

1. Purpose of the study

Although much research has been done so far on the effect of using authentic materials in ESL classrooms, a review of the literature suggests that there have bee no studies that address this issue in the UAE educational context. Moreover, there is a need for improvement in the current textbook series used in UAE. A study showing that authentic materials can create a positive attitude towards learning the second language and thus motivate learners, may encourage teachers and course book

designers in the Curriculum Department to adopt them. Teachers may then find it useful and rewarding to incorporate authentic materials for their students on a regular basis as supplements to their course book which they cannot entirely get rid of or ignore. Text book designers of the Ministry, in return, may start thinking seriously of designing course books based on authentic texts written in authentic language.

2. Context

The UAE mainstream educational system comprises of three cycles, the primary, the preparatory, and the secondary. The secondary cycle includes grade 10, 11 and 12. When students finish grade 10, they split up into either the Art or Science section based on their preference. English is taught as a subject as the language of instruction is Arabic. Students start learning English from grade one until grade 12. In high school, they take six English classes a week, 45 minutes each. Generally speaking, English language teachers in the UAE mainstream schools are non-native speakers. They are either locals or Arabs.

English textbooks adopted in high schools for grade 10 and 11 are locally made, and they are part of the *English for the Emirates* Series which are taught starting from the Preparatory cycle. They are written by people in the Center for Curriculum & Instructional Materials Development in the Ministry of Education in coordination with some teachers in the English Language Department in UAE University. Based on the information given on the cover page, the authors are all local, however, the editor is a native speaker. The textbooks were first published in 1995 and they are taught until now. The first book revision took place in 1996 in which typos only were corrected. Since then, no adaptation or change to improve the quality of the book has ever been made.

However, in 2001, the Ministry of Education in attempt to improve the quality of the curriculum, introduced the new grade 12 textbook which was, upon its request, written by three native speakers who teach in the English Language Department in the Higher Colleges of Technology / Woman College in Sharjah. However, the experiment has not been systematically analyzed or evaluated given the fact that teachers have not received any feedback from the Ministry so far. According to the English supervisors, English teachers, and students, the quality of the book is much

better in that its topics are more interesting. Yet, they all agree that the materials in the book are too long to be covered in the given time.

As my study entails evaluating Book 11 from the students' point of view, I will describe it in more detail. The materials of the book come in 12 units; six units are in the Pupils' Book and another six in the Work Book. The first six units need to be covered in the first semester which lasts for three months and a half, and the rest needs to be finished by the end of the second semester which also lasts for the same period.

The Pupils' Book presents general English. It is made up of some reading comprehension passages with some questions on them, and some drills on pronunciation. In the end of each unit, there is a word bank for the active vocabulary. The book comes with a cassette in which some of those texts and drills are tape recorded. The reading texts are fabricated and written in an inauthentic language in that it lacks idiomatic expressions which are so common in the English language.

Besides, those texts mostly address local issues. Examples are vegetation in the UAE, UAE higher educational institutions, and UAE archeological sites, to name a few. Even general topics like future careers, the use of technology, etc, are discussed in a way that does not stimulate any interest in the subjects because they present simple and irrelevant information for the students.

The Work Book is made up of some exercises and activities that introduce the students to some grammatical rules, and functional expressions. However, they are presented as separate drills. Thus, they do not show the pragmatics of the language, or help students realize how they are used in real-life situations. Besides, they are repeated in the same manner and rigid sequence in each unit. The layout of both books is not eye-catching as it lacks attractive drawings or illustrations.

Generally speaking most of our students face many difficulties learning the English language. According to them, one of the main reasons can be attributed to the materials in their textbooks. They believe that such materials are unlikely to be effective, and they are unlikely to create an interesting learning environment or stimulate a positive attitude towards learning the language.

What makes the situation even worse is that when joining universities, the students experience many difficulties. Perhaps the most serious one is that they

mostly fail entrance exams and they join intensive language programs. Another challenge they face, even after they start their university life, is understanding their instructors who are mostly native speakers of English. Besides, they face difficulties understanding English course books because they have not been exposed to authentic language in their previously learning stages.

3. Research Questions.

My students' lack of motivation and their unwillingliness to learn English has always been one of my major concerns as a language teacher. Unfortunately, many of my high school students are passive, irresponsive, and have negative attitudes towards learning English. Consequently, they have low proficiency level and poor performance. Such attitudes are unlikely to result in effective learning as motivation is an essential factor determining success in language learning.

Many of those students attribute such attitudes to boring textbooks that are of no interest or relevance to them. It is this attribution that has driven me to investigate the effect of incorporating authentic materials in my class. Hence, this study is to an attempt to detect and identify more closely the impact of using authentic materials by answering the following two questions:

1. What are students' attitudes towards the use of authentic materials in their English classes?
2. Does the use of authentic materials help students become more interested and motivated in English class?

In other words, I will try to understand what distinctive features might authentic materials have, and in what way they can improve my students' language skills. Besides, I will try to investigate the best way of exploiting authentic materials, and get ideas on how to use them.

4. Overview of the Chapters and Appendices

Chapter one has introduced the readers to the purpose of the study and the research questions. Besides, it introduces them to the context of the study. In other words, it describes the context of ESL learning in the mainstream high schools in the UAE. In addition, it describes the prescribed language teaching materials, and sheds light on the overall learning outcomes of high school graduates.

Chapter Two reviews what has been said in the literature about the impact of using authentic materials in ESL classroom. First it sheds some light on the major paradigm shifts that paved the way for the introduction of authentic materials. Next, it provides different definitions and examples of authentic materials. Then, it presents some of their distinctive features. Finally, it provides language teachers with some criteria on how to use them effectively. Chapter Three provides a background about the participants of the study, and explains in details how the data collection instruments were designed, developed and finalized. Chapter Four describes how the gathered data were categorized and analyzed, and presents the findings. Chapter Five summarizes the main findings and provides some pedagogical implications. In addition, it sheds light on the limitations, and suggests some areas for future study.

Appendix 1 contains the pre-questionnaire that presents students' textbook evaluation survey (the closed- and open-ended questions). Appendix 2 presents the students' attitudes towards the suggested authentic materials survey. Appendix 3 includes the weekly review sheet and the worksheets of the eight presented activities. Appendix 4 introduces the students' overall evaluation sheet of all the introduced activities. Appendix 5 presents the interview questions. Appendix 6 includes the post-questionnaire that detects students' attitudes towards using authentic materials in ESL classroom (the closed- and open-ended questions).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This section will come in the following five main categories: 1- Major paradigm shifts in the field of second language teaching. 2- Introduction of authentic materials. 3- Impact of authentic materials on second language learners 4 - Using authentic materials in ESL classrooms. 5- Conclusion.

1- Major Paradigm Shifts in the Field of Second Language Teaching

Recent years have witnessed dramatic changes in the field of second language teaching driven by the development took place in Applied Linguistics. In 1970s and 1980s linguists started to analyze language from a new perspective. They viewed the language as part of the social process which called for focusing on how the language functions and how it is used in context rather than as a fixed system. Thompson (1996) indicates that "one important implication of the functional view of language is that context and language are interdependent" (p. 9).

Following from this, linguists came to realize that language needed to be investigated as a medium of communication and social interaction. This realization has brought about the concept of Functional Grammar. Lock (1996) proposes that "approaching grammar from functional perspective refers to an approach to understanding grammar that focuses on how language works to achieve a variety of different functional and communicative purposes" (p. 265).

This implies that the speakers' and writers' choice of grammatical forms is determined by their purposes of using the language, and the context in which it appears. In other words, grammar, as Lock proposes "is seen as a net work of interrelated systems. Each system contains a set of options from which the speaker selects according to the meaning he or she wishes to make" (p.267).

Hence, linguists within this framework felt the need, as Lock maintains, to "explain the relationship between different elements of grammar and how they interact to create meanings in context" (p. ix).Thus, as Lock proposes, "a grammarian interested in this kind of description is likely to use data from authentic texts (the term text is used here for both spoken and written language) in specific contexts" (p. 1).

Hence, and unlike the traditional approach which views the language as a set of rules, and distinguishes between grammatical and ungrammatical forms, the

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functional grammar approach focuses, as Lock maintains, "on the appropriateness of a form for a particular communicative purpose in a particular context. [Hence], the primary concern is with the functions of structures and their constituents and with their meanings in context" (p. 1).

Halliday (1994) echoes the same thinking. He proposes that "a functional grammar is essentially a "natural grammar, in the sense that every thing in it can be explained, ultimately by reference to how language is used" (p. 13). Halliday also believes that "Grammar is the central processing unit of language, the powerhouse where meanings are created" (p. 15).

This shift from a form-focused to a meaning focused approach had its impact on teaching methodologies and curriculum design. Brown (2000) indicates that this change has "entailed changes in the way language is described, from structural syllabuses to notional-functional syllabuses and, more recently to content / topic-based syllabuses and changes in the ways in which language is taught in the classroom" (p. 227). Thompson (1996) argues that "a crucial part of our language ability is knowing how things are typically-or even obligatory-said in certain contexts" (p. 36).

Rayagopalan (2004) following the same direction of thought, proposes that "to learn a second language successfully is to be able to perform real-life activities with and through it and not simply to internalize a set of grammatical rules" (p. 405).

This tendency towards focusing on the communicative value of the language had paved the way for the introduction of the communicative approach. Linguists and researchers came to know that reducing the role of language teaching to the teaching of grammatical rules was not sufficient. Thus, they argued that language teachers should familiarize the students with the communicative functions of those grammatical rules, especially because, as Lock (1996) explains, "the rules of grammar found in many textbooks of the [past] period (and it must be admitted in some currently used textbooks) were often at best half-truths and did little to help learners see how the structures could be used meaningfully in context" (p. 267).

In other words, proponents of the communicative approach grew unsatisfied with traditional teacher-centered, and form-accuracy oriented approaches which, as Nunan (1988) maintains, "did not enable the learner to use the language to carry out

various real-world tasks" (p. 25).They argue that learners can best learn the language when provided with learning contexts that allow them to negotiate meaning, share knowledge, and exchange ideas, thoughts, feelings, and experiences. They emphasize that effective learning outcomes can be attained by involving learners in authentic or real-life tasks. In other words, teachers can best enhance their students' communication competence through providing them with opportunities to use the language in situations similar to those they will encounter in real life. Hall (2001) points out that "the need to communicate is at the heart of learning a language. If we want our students to learn English, we must put them in situations where they need to communicate in English" (p. 230).

Following the same direction of thought, Morley and Guariento (2001) maintain that "with the onset of the communicative movement a greater awareness of the need to develop students' skill for the real world has meant that teachers endeavor to simulate this world in the classroom" (p. 347).

As a consequence, the performance aspect of the language has come to be considered the important element that determines communicative competence. Additionally, a considerable emphasis has been placed by researchers and practitioners on learner-centered teaching. Such an approach has focused not only on types of activities learners interact with, but also on enhancing learners' engagement in directing their own learning. Thus, and within its framework, learners are no longer passive recipients. Rather, they are active participants who are fully aware and responsible for their own learning, and whose needs and interests should be addressed and attended to by their teachers.

2- Introduction of Authentic Materials

Such emphasis on simulating the real world in the classroom, learners' interactiveness, and self-directed learning has drawn the attention of researchers and teachers to the notion of authenticity. Swaffar (1985) states that "the use of authentic materials to teach subject matter reflects a major goal of recent developments in all communicatively based approaches" (p. 16). According to Yair (2000), "Learning experiences are optimized when instruction is authentic, challenging, demands skills, and allows for student autonomy" (p. 191). Hedge (2000) echoes the same thinking. He argues that "if the goal of teaching is to equip students to deal ultimately with the

authentic language of the real world, they should be given opportunities to cope with this in the classroom" (p. 67).

However, authenticity, as Trabelsi (2005) proposes, "is a relative matter and different aspects of it can be presented in different degrees" (p. 215). Indeed, the concept of authenticity has always given rise to much controversy among researchers. Defining different facets or aspects of authenticity, such as authentic teaching, authentic tasks, and authentic materials, has always been debatable. Yet, as Mishan (2004) maintains, "from any concordance for the world 'authentic' and 'authenticity', it will quickly emerge that authenticity is a positive attribute, collocating with desirable qualities such as purity, originality and quality" (p. 219).

Shwaffar (1985) defines an authentic text as "one whose primary intent is to communicate meaning" (p. 17). Jordan (1997) refers to authentic texts as "materials which are designed for native speakers" (p. 113). Hedge (2000), in return, defines authentic materials as "[those] which have not been designed especially for language learners and which therefore do not have contrived or simplified language" (p. 67). According to Gebhard (2000), "authentic materials include anything that is used as a part of communication" (p. 100). Hall (2001) defines authentic materials as "originally written for some other purpose than language teaching" (p. 231). Thus, authentic materials, as the definitions imply, present the language as it is used in its original community.

Gebhard (2000) provides a partial list of some authentic materials that have been used by EFL/ESL teachers. Authentic listening/viewing materials include silent films, TV commercials, quiz shows, cartoons, news, comedy shows, dramas, movies, and soap operas; radio news, dramas, and ads; pop, rock, country, folk, and children's songs; home video; professionally videotaped travel logs, documentaries, and sales pitches. Authentic visual materials include slides, photographs, paintings; sketches; drawings by children; stick-figure drawings; wordless street sign; silhouettes; calendar pictures; pictures from travel, news, and popular magazines; ink blots; postcard pictures; wordless picture books; and stamps. Authentic printed materials include newspaper articles, cartoons, advertisements, movie advertisements, astrology columns, sports reports, obituary columns, and advice columns; travel magazines; science, math, and history books; short stories; novels; books of photographs, lyrics to

popular, rock, folk, and children's songs; restaurant menus; street signs; postcards; currency; tourist information brochures and tourist guidebooks; university catalogs; department store catalogs; telephone books; city maps; calendars; TV guides; driving licenses, comic books; greeting cards; business cards; bank checks and deposit forms; grocery coupons; hotel registration forms; bus and plane schedules.

3- Impact of Authentic Materials on Second Language Learners

 According to many researchers, using such materials in the classroom provides learners with a very rich source of language input, and stimulates a variety of communication skills. Thus, unlike prescribed materials, they foster their abilities in different language skills. For instance, many researchers argue that spoken texts which teachers still use for teaching speaking are not effective. Such texts which come mainly in the form of scripted dialogues accompanied by audio cassettes are mainly designed for the language classroom, and therefore, Swaffar (1985) emphasizes that "dialogues and carefully edited short readings lack the essential features of authentic messages: repetition, redundancy, and discourse markers which confirm and elaborate on a particular authentic style or cultural pattern" (p. 17).

Hedge (2000) argues that "contrived listening texts, in particular, have characteristics which in no way approximate real spoken language" (p. 67). According to Burns (2001), such materials do not reflect real interactions that take place in the real world. Burns explains that they lack important elements of true spoken discourse such as "the unpredictability, the dynamism, and the structures and the linguistic features" (p. 125). Burns also points out that utterances in authentic or natural conversations, unlike contrived dialogues, are "fragmented, vary in length and cannot be set out as completed sentences" (p. 125). He adds that unlike authentic conversations, scripted texts "present interaction as smooth, predictable and trouble free" (p. 125). Hence, Burns concludes that "students who encounter only scripted spoken language in the classroom have less opportunity to extend their linguistic repertoires in ways that prepare them for unforeseeable interactions outside the classroom" (p. 125).

Rimarcik (1999) proposes that "[Automated Voice Response] Systems can serve as a rich source of authentic materials as well as cultural information that ESL teachers can use to develop listening tasks for thematic units" (p. 14).

Gray (2000) advocating the cross-cultural approach, states that introducing students to authentic materials encourages them to compare between their own culture and those presented in them. Gray explains that teachers can do this by designing tasks that allow the students to question the content of the material and call for responses elicited from their L1 value systems. Thus, Gray proposes that the use of authentic materials helps students think more critically and engage themselves actively with the culture which produce them. Hence, Gray believes that "[By] encouraging our students to view materials as more than linguistic objects, we are as well as developing their language skills, allowing students to voice their own opinions, and reverse the one-way flow of information" (p. 281). Pulverness (2002) echoes the same sentiment. He states that "in recent years there has been a great deal of interest-and activity-in developing materials and methodology for inter cultural learning" (p. 71).

According to Quinlisk (2003), introducing language learners to mass media helps them improve their media literacy. Quinlisk believes that mass media can be used not only "as a source of linguistic input but also as a tool for learning to interpret multiple layers of messages and to separate mediated images of people, places, things, ideas, and values from those of the real world" (p. 35).

Quinlisk points out that mass media lend themselves easily to learning settings as they enhance communication. Quinlisk explains that "if we think of a language learner as one who strives to participate in a target language community, …the relationship between language learning and media becomes clear" (p. 35). Thus, Quinlisk recommends that "as a strong element of popular culture in many English-speaking communities, media are an undeniable part of multiple conversations to which language learners need access" (p. 35).

Quinlisk proposes that incorporating mass media which offer a large amount of linguistic information, provides language learners with the opportunity to improve both their linguistic and pragmatic competence by introducing them to the language features. Quinlisk indicates that this linguistic information "not only … illustrates grammatical structures, pragmatics and discourse patterns, but … also cultivate subtle messages about social interaction, rules of participation, and what is valued or devalued in certain communities" (p. 35).

Eken,(2003) advocates promoting media literacy in ESL classrooms too. Eken indicates that "[media] literacy activities can be [a good help for students] to deconstruct and analyze media texts, think critically about them, and thus gain critical autonomy in the interpretation of media text they encounter in their daily lives"(p.52).

According to Eken, "films, along with other authentic media forms and video materials, are used for different purposes, and that when chosen and exploited in a principled manner, they have an important role in modern English language teaching" (p. 51).

Schneider (2005) emphasizes that incorporating media materials in ESL classrooms has the potential to introduce grammar explicitly and engage students in critical thinking tasks. Schneider proposes that "lessons structured around local issues and concerns can be successfully linked to explicit grammar focus" (p. 298). Schneider also argues that "such lessons have the potential to raise students' awareness of critical issues in the world around them and to help them understand how ideologies and view points can be expressed through grammatical choice" (p. 298).

Based on their classroom experiences at Korean universities, Tyson and Baek (1999) argue that "current news articles can be used effectively in conversation and composition classes" (p. 89). They explain, for example, that authentic articles introduced in composition classes provide students with real models of different genres of writing. Examples of such genres are "writing letters, reporting facts, describing a process, and stating an opinion" (p. 90). Tyson and Baek add that through such articles, teachers may help their students acquire the necessary skills for reading them and for choosing other suitable ones to read on their own.

Picken (1999) agrees that the use of advertisements in ESL classrooms is useful in many ways. Picken indicates that they can be used to practice grammar by drawing students' to a particular form, introduce specific vocabulary. Picken provides examples of how they can be used. According to Picken, "classified ads … are often used to teach reading for specific information. Job adverts are used as a stimulus for writing, especially of letters of application and resume's, and also as a starting point for job interview simulation" (p. 249).

However, Picken argues that advertisements have an advantage over other types of authentic materials. Picken argues that "the language of ads … is authentic and up-to-date" (p. 250). He points out that "learners enjoy ads and are motivated by them. A related idea is that because ads are creative, they stimulate learners to be creative" (p. 250). Besides, Picken emphasizes that advertisements provide learners with a valuable source of information about culture. Picken also indicates that "ads show (paralanguage, slices of every day life), and for the cultural value that they reflect. The subject matter of ads also ties in well with many common topics in language learning" (p. 250).

Hence, the effectiveness of authentic materials clearly lies in their distinctive features compared to prescribed or artificial ones. Obviously, the main feature is that they present the target language as it is used in the real world. In this way, they help students relate what happens in the classroom to real-life. In other words, authentic materials, as Morely and Guarients (2001) indicate, "give the learner the feeling that he or she is learning the 'real' language; that they are in touch with a living entity, the target language as it used by the community which speaks it" (p. 347). Such a link makes learners value the language more, and creates the need for them to learn it which increases their motivation. According to Cheung (2001), "students are only motivated to learn things that are important and meaningful to them" (p. 55). Yair (2000), echoes the same position. He states that "students learn best when they can see the connections between what they are learning and the real world" (p. 195).

Another important feature of authentic materials is that they, as Bacon and Finnemann (1990) maintain, "provide the necessary context for appropriately relating form to meaning in the language acquisition process" (p. 459). Spelleri (2002) proposes that authentic materials promote real language that is rich in context and culturally relevant. Dornyei (1994) proposes that using authentic materials increases the attractiveness of the course content which promotes learners' motivation. According to Morley, & Guarients, (2001), "the use of authentic texts is now considered to be me way of maintaining or increasing students' motivation for learning" (p. 347).

More importantly, using authentic materials provides teachers with very good opportunities to build their students' confidence, promote their autonomous learning,

and create an exciting learning environment. Unlike prescribed textbooks, over which teachers and students have no control, authentic materials provide more freedom. Teachers can freely select and exploit them in a way that fits their beliefs in teaching, meets their students' needs, and arouses their interests. Even more, the opportunity is there to involve students in selecting materials and designing tasks. Hence, they are more effective in motivating students towards learning the language. According to Yair (2000), "the more students feel in command of their learning and feel active and excited by it, the more they fulfill their learning potential" (p. 193). Cheung (2001) explains that "since students who lack intrinsic motivation often desire variety, excitement, and novelty, effective teachers should choose variety of teaching methods and learning materials that will motivate their students" (p. 58).

Timmis (2005) justifies the introduction of authentic materials based on the tendency among many ESL learners and teachers to "conform to native speakers' grammar norms, including norms of informal grammar" (p. 118). Timmis proposes that if "we are going to use a spoken text as a vehicle for teaching spoken grammar, the text should have the potential to engage the students' interest and should be plausible as natural interaction" (p. 118).

However, Hall (2001) argues that "it is not primarily the materials themselves which have to be authentic. Rather, it is the response to the materials -- what is done with them--that should be authentic" (p. 231). He explains that "an authentic response dictates the addressing of content rather than form, and discussion for mere checking of understanding" (p. 231). Hutchinson and Waters (1999) echo the same position. They propose that "there is no intrinsic merit in an 'authentic' text. What we have to do is to see the text as part of the teaching/learning process" (p. 159). In other words, according to them, the question is not whether the text is authentic or not. Rather, what really counts is the role that it needs to play in the learning process. Hence, they conclude that "a text alone has no value. A text can only be truly authentic in the context for which it was originally written" (p. 159).

Morely and Guarients (2001) indicate that one can't separate text and task maintained because such "separation is rather an artificial one, in the real world, language input and output usually occur as part of an integrated process of communication" (p. 352). According to Morley and Guarients, "pedagogic tasks must

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relate to real world target tasks. From this perspective, a task might be said to be authentic if it has a clear relationship with real world needs" (p. 350). They also point out that " one of the crucial aspects of task authenticity is whether real communication takes place, whether the language has been used for a genuine purpose" (p. 349).

4 - Using Authentic Materials in ESL Classrooms

Therefore a legitimate question arises here, and that is, how can language teachers make a good use of authentic materials in their classrooms? In other words, what are the criteria teachers need to consider and follow when selecting and using authentic materials? According to Spelleri (2002), identifying authentic materials items, and determining their applicability and adaptability for classroom use, is crucial to effective use of authentic materials. Spelleri also maintains that another consideration is the comprehensibility of the materials. Tyson and Baek (1990) state that teachers need to select their authentic materials according to their students' proficiency levels, needs, and interests.

Morly and Guaricients emphasize that "[learners should be] genuinely interested in the task, its topic and its purpose, and [should] understand its relevance" (p. 351). Peacock states that (1997) "it is important that materials selected for the classroom motivate learners, so one criterion for the selection of materials should be their effect on motivation" (p. 152). Morley and Guarients add another criteria which is the potential of the task to promote classroom interaction through discussion, negotiation, and co-operative learning. They propose that "it is important that the choice and sequence of tasks are negotiated, and it is this very process of negotiation which is authentic" (p. 350).

Hence, and based on those criteria, the following pedagogical implications can be made. Teachers need to select their authentic materials according to their students' proficiency levels, needs, and interests. In other words, they need to decide on the materials' level of difficulty. Materials which are highly above or beyond learners' abilities are de-motivating. Tyson and Baek (1999) suggest using authentic materials that do not have vocabulary that is too complex or "too many unfamiliar idioms or slang expressions" for a particular group of students (p. 91). Besides, teachers should decide if the materials present new concepts to the students. In this case, there is no

direct background knowledge that they can build on. Thus, they should create a meaningful context for that concept.

Another consideration is culture sensitivity. Nunan (1988) points out that "in cases where materials and/or learning activities violate deeply-held or culturally-based beliefs, the materials should be abandoned" (p. 102). Washburn (2001) echoes the same position. Washburn emphasizes that "teachers must not only provide learners with models that are authentic, accurate, and appropriate, but they must also give their students information about the norms and raise their awareness about the limitations and cross linguistic variations" (p. 26). In addition, Tyson and Baek (1999) indicate that teachers should use different types of materials.

5- Conclusion

Based on what has been said in the literature, the findings obviously reveal that using authentic materials in ESL classrooms is really rewarding. Hence, although teachers work within tight limitations, and despite the difficulties associated with using authentic materials, such as lack of resources and time constraints, I believe that they can still use them. According to Tyson and Baek (1999), "with just a little creativity, [authentic] materials can be prepared with very little work on the part of the instructor" (p. 91). Besides, book designers need to incorporate authentic materials in course books since materials, as Nunan (1988) maintains, "often seem more prominent than any other element in the curriculum, and they do more than simply lubricate wheels of learning" (p. 98).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study investigates High School Students' attitudes towards the use of authentic materials in their English Language Classes at Asma Bint Omais High School. In other words, it attempts to answer the following questions: Do the students prefer authentic materials over their textbooks? If so, why? Does the use of authentic materials help increase their interest in learning the language? If so, how? For the purpose of this study, I will use Gebhard's (2000) definitions of authentic materials. He defines them as "anything that is used as a part of communication" (p.100). The study lasted for six weeks starting on Sunday 2nd April, 2006, and ending on Sunday 13th May, 2006. Data were collected from multiple sources. Quantitative data were collected from surveys, pre and post questionnaires. Qualitative data were collected from surveys, open-ended questions, classroom observation and interviews.

Participants

The participants of the study were Class 11, the Science Section. This class consisted of 30 grade 11 young women. However, the students actually involved in the study were 25 students, chosen because they regularly attended the classes. The majority, 15, was non Emirati Arabs and the remaining 10 were locals Emirati students. Their age range is from 16-18. They have been learning English since grade 1.

Pre-Questionnaire Survey

The pre-questionnaire aimed at detecting the students' attitudes toward their textbooks. It had nine close-ended questions with yes, somewhat, and no options which were translated into Arabic and one open-ended question (See Appendix 1). The close-ended questions evolved around whether they thought the textbook was interesting, stimulating and relevant to their every day life experiences, and whether it presented the language of native speakers in real life situations. The open-ended question was devoted to comments and suggestions.

The second survey given, before the introduction of the new activities, aimed at rating twelve suggested authentic materials according to the students' interest, and getting their suggestions on how to present them. (See Appendix 2). They included a speech given by a native speaker, TV. Programmes, Radio broadcasting, Newspapers,

Magazines, Video Clips, Websites, Booklets and Leaflets, Brochures and Posters, Short Stories, Poems and Cartoons. The purpose of this initial survey was to discover which materials the students were most interested in supplementing their regular lessons with.

Weekly Review Sheet

Based on the results above, I introduced my students to eight different activities involving authentic materials. Moreover, I relied on the discussion I had with my students, and my own judgment of their needs and proficiency levels. The activities were designed to make them as authentic, useful, and interesting as possible. All the authentic materials used were not translated into Arabic, so students had to concentrate and listen, or read carefully in order to comprehend well.

In order to assess the students' attitudes and interest in the various activities using authentic materials introduced over the six weeks of the study, I had the students fill out a weekly review sheet. This review sheet consisted of the bulk of my data collection to answer my research questions. Every week, after being introduced to two different activities, in addition to their regular coursework, the students were asked to fill out the weekly review sheet documenting what they had learned from the activity and their interest level in the activity. (See Appendix 3).

Introduction of Authentic Materials

I presented each material once at a time, two days a week, Saturday and Monday, over four weeks. Then, I asked them to do the review sheet the next day of each activity. Each activity was supposed to last for 45 minutes. However, extra time was arranged for when long materials were introduced. Students did all the activities in groups. There were six groups made up of five students each. Activities were given twice a week on Saturday and Monday. Thus, they were taken interchangeably with the textbook activities.

The first authentic material introduced was a video clip in which some American native speakers were interviewed expressing their opinion about weather and its impact on them. Before watching the video clip, students were asked to describe some pictures related to seasons of the year in order to elicit adjectives that describe weather. After watching the video clip twice, students, in groups, were asked to answer text related questions, and then fill in a table with adjectives used by the

interviewees. The last activity was paragraph writing in which they described the weather of that day and planned for activities to practice accordingly (See Appendix 4.1).

The activities lasted for 45 minutes and the objectives were:

1- To present different types of weather the USA has, and its impact on the people there.

2- To introduce students to different ways of describing weather.

3- To introduce them to native speaker's pronunciation.

4- To improve students' listening, speaking and writing skills.

The second authentic material was Dear Abby's column in News Tribune Magazine which is published in the USA. I came a cross this activity in, *Using Current News Articles Effectively in Korean University English Classes* (1999), an article written by Tyson and Baek who tried the activity out with their students in some of their writing classes. They reported that it was an interesting and useful experience. Thus, I felt it would be rewarding for my students too. The idea was to introduce the students to some of Abby's readers' letters in which they asked for advice, and then ask them to write their own responses to them and compare both. I chose three letters which had an appropriate vocabulary level, and which talked about problems which are culturally suitable for my students.

To pave the way for this activity, I held a discussion with them around similar columns in our local Magazine, Zahrat Al-Khaleej written by Fawziya Al-Derai'a. The first activity was to revise some relevant pre-taught functions such as asking for and giving advice, expressing opinion, agreement and disagreement. Then, I distributed the first letter with Abby's response being cut off. Students then read the problem; understand it guessing the meaning of the few difficult words from context. In groups, they wrote the response. A member of each group read their response so that students could compare their responses with each other. Finally, I distributed Abby's response and asked them to identify the difference. I followed the same procedures with another two letters (See Appendix 4.2). To wrap up, we held a discussion comparing and contrasting our problems here in the Arabian Gulf, with theirs in the west. The activities lasted for 50 minutes and the objectives were:

1- To introduce my students to social problems found in the west culture.

2- To enhance my students' critical thinking and problem solving abilities.

3- To improve their reading and writing skills.

The third authentic material introduced was an American movie entitled "Home Alone", Part one. The story of the film is about Kevin, the eight-year-old boy whose family had left him behind when traveling to Paris at Christmas. After going through many troubles, Kevin could meet his family again. The film sheds light on the importance of family relationships, and the difficulty of living alone.

To pave the way for the activity, I held a discussion with the students around the poster of the film and the title eliciting some ideas about the characters and events. The activity was to write a film review. Students in groups wrote a summary of the main events and wrote about things they liked and disliked about the film (see Appendix 4.3). Watching the film took 90 minutes and doing the activity took 20 minutes. The objectives were the following:

1- To enhance my students' critical thinking skills.

2- To improve their listening comprehension and writing skills.

The fourth authentic material was a TV program, an episode of Oprah Winfrey's Talk Show. Before listening to the conversations, students were asked to anticipate, predict the topics and issued talked about by watching the gestures and facial expressions of the interviewer Oprah, and the interviewees. So, the volume was put on mute. The conversations were translated into Arabic; I had to hide it with slips of papers.

There were three interviews. The first one was with the American black movie star Chris Rock who talked about his experience when visiting homeless people who survived Hurricane Katrina. He also talked about his new TV show. The second was with the famous youngest American basketball player, Lebrone James. The third one was with the mother of James Frey who won Oprah'a Book Club Award for that week. His book was entitled, *A Million Little Pieces.*

In the first activity, students were asked to watch the program, summarize the main topics discussed in the interviews. The second activity asked them to list things they had learned about the west culture. Then, they were to describe Oprah's character and identify the program distinctive features that made it one of the most popular talk shows world wide. In the last activity, students were asked to write expressions they

liked and felt they would use in the future (See Appendix 4.4). The activities lasted for 90 minutes and the objectives were the following:

1- To introduce my students to the media language.

2- To enhance their critical thinking skills.

3- To improve their listening, speaking and writing skills.

The fifth authentic materials were some products I always use such as toothpaste, a facial cleanser, body wash, eye make-up remover, a shower gel, hair shampoo and a whitening tooth polish. To pave the way for the activity, I asked my students about type of products they use and how they use them. Then, I introduced mine. Each group chose one product, read the information on it, and then answered the questions on the work sheet related to what its brand name, what make it was, what its ingredients were, how it should be used, and whether they would like to try it (See Appendix 4.5)

Most of the information and instructions were simple. However, there were some difficult words. I asked the students to guess their meanings from context or from the examples I gave. The activity lasted for 45 minutes and its objectives were:

1- To familiarize my students with instructions found on products.

2- To improve their reading skills.

The sixth authentic material was a cartoon film, Cinderella, which was my students' choice. As they were already familiar with the story, I had decided to direct their focus on the language used in the film. Hence, the main activity was to find words, expressions and functions equivalent to those given on the worksheet (see Appendix 4. 6). The second activity was to write a story from their imagination, and draw their own cartoons. Part of this activity was done in class, and the rest was left as a home work.

The activities lasted for 45 minutes and the objectives were:

1- To help my students recognize how words functions and expressions are used in context.

2- To improve their imagination.

3- To improve their listening and writing skills.

The seventh authentic material was a speech delivered by a native speaker. The guest was Dr. Cindy Gunn from the American University of Sharjah. The speech was

about how to get ready for university life. Dr. Gunn touched upon important and relevant issues to students such as university rules and regulations, activities, exams, grading, research skills, plagiarism, etc. The activities were note taking and open discussion (see Appendix 4.7). The class lasted for 90 minutes although it was supposed to finish in 45 minutes. It was extended with another teacher's permission as the students were actively engaged in this activity. The objectives were:

    1- To introduce students to university life.

    2- To improve their note taking and communication skills.

    3- To improve their listening and speaking skills.

The last authentic material introduced was some recorded voice mail messages of three native speakers. The first one was Canadian, the second one was British, and the third was American. To pave the way for the activity, I held a discussion with the students eliciting the words: voice mail and message. In the first activity, students listened twice to the tape and wrote down the messages. Then, I held a discussion eliciting the difference between formal and more personalized ones. In the second activity, students listened again more carefully to identify the accent of the speaker. The last activity had them to write their own voice mail messages in groups and record them (see Appendix 4.8).

Students had chosen to make the recording in groups, in which each one took part, so that it would sound funnier and more interesting. I did the recordings using my own tape recorder. I had each group outside the English Club for two or three minutes. When finished, students listened to each other's recording choosing the best one based on clarity of voice, and correctness of pronunciation. The activities took 45 minutes and the objectives were:

    1- To introduce my students to voice mail messages.

    2- To introduce them to different English accents.

    3- To improve their listening, pronunciation and writing skills.

Overall Evaluation Sheet

Having finished with the eight activities, students were asked to complete an overall evaluation sheet. It aimed at identifying their overall impression of the project they had participated in. In the first part, students were asked to mention things they liked and disliked about it. In the second part they listed their best activities (See Appendix 3).

Post Activity Questionnaire

Seeking comparative data, in week six, students filled out a post-questionnaire so as to detect their attitudes toward using authentic materials. The first part of the survey was made up of ten close-ended questions with yes, Somewhat, No options. They evolved around whether the students thought that the authentic materials introduced in class were interesting, useful, and stimulating, whether they helped them learn the language better through introducing them to the way it is used in real life, and whether they thought authentic materials could replace their textbooks or be used on a regular basis. The second part of the questionnaire was an open ended question devoted to comments and suggestions (see Appendix 7).

Students' Interviews

In order to identify my students' attitudes towards using authentic materials more closely, I interviewed 15 of them. The interviews were tape recorded and they were carried out in the last three days of week six. I chose the participants based on two criteria. Firstly, I wanted them to be of different proficiency levels, excellent, intermediate and weak based on their grades and classroom interaction. Secondly, after analyzing the surveys, I came across interesting and thought provoking statements that I felt I needed to pursue in more detail.

At the beginning of the interview, I asked them to talk freely about their overall impression about the idea of using authentic materials in their English classes. Gradually, my questions were more focused. I asked them to tell me exactly the difference they experienced when using the authentic materials and doing the activities compared to those in their textbooks. Additionally, I asked them to elaborate more on things they learnt and challenges they faced (see Appendix 6). Moreover, there were times when I referred the interviewees to one of her statements and asked her to explain. The interviews were carried out in English, however, those who faced

difficulty expressing themselves in English, were allowed to speak in Arabic. The results of all the data collection vehicles will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

Data were gathered and analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The findings were classified in the following five main categories: (1) Students' attitudes towards their textbooks. (2) Students' interest in the suggested authentic materials. (3) Students' feedback or reaction to each of the eight authentic materials introduced. (4) Students' overall evaluation of all the activities. (5) Students' attitudes towards using authentic materials in ESL classes.

1. Students' Attitudes Towards their Grade 11 English Textbooks.

Data in this section were gathered by a questionnaire of nine close-ended questions that investigated students' perceptions and attitudes towards their textbooks. In addition, there was an open ended question which enabled them to add their comments and suggestions. The results are shown in the following table:

Table 1. Students' Attitudes towards Their Grade 11 English Textbook (N=25)

Questions	Yes	Some what	No
1) Do you think the content of the textbook is interesting? هل تعتقدين بأن محتوى الكتاب مشوق؟	1 **4%**	14 56%	10 40%
2) Do you think it is relevant to your every day life experiences? هل ترين بأنه مرتبط بخبرات حياتك اليومية؟	3 12%	13 **52%**	9 36%
3) Do you think the textbook provides you with sufficient activities? هل تعتقدين أن أنشطة الكتاب كافية وتفي بالغرض؟	1 4%	3 12%	21 **84%**
4) Do you think these activities are varied and stimulating? هل تعتقدين بأنها متنوعة ومحفزة ومثيرة للدافعية لديك؟	2 8%	6 24%	17 **68%**
5) Do they help you learn the language effectively? هل تساعدك على تعلّم اللغة بفعالية؟	2 **8%**	14 56%	9 36%
6) Do the textbook materials help you recognize how the language functions? هل تساعدك مادة الكتاب على إدراك وتمييز وظائف اللغة	4 16%	17 **68%**	4 16%

7) Do you think they present the language as it is used by its native speakers in real-life situations? هل تعتقدين بأنها تقدم اللغة كما يستخدمها متحدثيها الأصليين في مواقفهم الحياتية؟	1 4%	4 16%	20 **80%**
8) Do they introduce you to the culture of the language? هل تعرفك على الثقافة المتعلقة باللغة؟	2 **8%**	13 52%	10 40%
9) Do they help you use the language outside classroom? هل تساعدك هذه المواد على استخدام اللغة خارج الفصل أي في المجتمع الخارجي؟	5 20%	13 **52%**	7 28%

As for the attractiveness and relevance of the content of the textbook, only four out of 25 students believed that it is interesting and relevant to their every day life experiences.

Results revealed that 84% (21) felt that the textbook does not provide sufficient activities, and 68% (17) believed that they are not varied or stimulating. Out of the 25 students surveyed, 80% (20) thought that the textbook materials do not present the language as it is used by its native speakers in real-life situations.

According to their responses, only two students agreed that their textbook activities help them learn the language effectively, and only five believed that their textbook materials help them use the language outside classroom. Thus, the findings clearly showed that the majority of my students had negative attitudes towards their textbook materials as they perceived them as boring and insufficient.

Through the open-ended question, students could provide reasons for these poor attitudes, and give suggestions for improvement. (*All the quotations from the open ended questions and the evaluation work sheets were included as presented by students). Most of them explained that the textbook is boring mainly because "the lessons are repeated," and "it has the same way of questions." Another student pointed out that "the book is so silly because the topics are too simple," and "the questions in the book are easy and direct so we don't use our mind."

According to the students' responses to the open-ended question, one of the main obstacles hindering their full use of their textbook was that it is too long. One of the students described the situation in the following statement: "We should finish the textbook in a short time, so we don't get enough practice that help us in real life."

Another problem seemed to be attributed to the quality of the content itself. Many students maintained that many topics are of no interest or relevance to them. One student, in this respect, pointed out "Some lessons don't mean anything to us and we can't use the information in the real life.". Another student echoed the same sentiment saying that "the lessons are meaningless".

Additionally, many students felt that "most of the workbook exercises is [devoted to] structures and functions." However, they are not presented integratedly. In other words, they do not provide the context that helps students realize how they are used in different situations. Thus, they believed that those textbook activities are not sufficient. Another student added that they "only memorize the book [as there is] no practice," "the textbook concentrates on [one] meaning of the [given] word although it has many meanings." One of the most informative comments in this respect was, "We should make students good in speaking first, then in structures and functions…. I am an excellent student in English. I take good marks but I can't speak with native speakers."

Another element related to the quality of the textbook materials, is lack of authenticity. Many students indicated that "The language of the book is not the language [they] hear in real life." One student attributed the reason to the fact that "there is no dealing with native speakers language." Another student explained that "there are no subjects, and lessons about people in foreign countries,…their religion, culture, traditions and thoughts."

Hence, students suggested that their textbook could be improved by 1- "Making the textbook short." 2- Adding topics that are more interesting to them, "close to their age", and" related to [them] as students." 3- Giving them the "real culture" of the language. 4- Introducing the language [they] actually use in [their] life."

2. Students' Interest in the Suggested Authentic Materials

Data in this category were gathered from a survey that asked students to rate their interest in the 12 suggested authentic materials. When analyzing the data, I decided to divide them into two main categories so that I could easily show them in percentage. The first category comprised low responses from one to five, and the second one comprised high responses from six to ten. The table below shows the findings.

Table 2. Students' Interest in the Suggested Authentic Materials (N=25)

| | Low | | | | | | | | | High | | |
Authentic Materials	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	%
Speech by a native speaker	2	1	-	-	3	3	4	4	-	8	19	**76%**
TV. Programmes	-	-	1	-	2	2	2	3	8	7	22	**88%**
Radio Broadcasting	3	1	4	4	6	3	1	3	-	-	7	**28%**
Newspaper	1	2	3	3	5	3	3	3	1	1	11	44%
Magazines	-	1	1	2	3	5	5	1	4	3	18	**72%**
Video Clips	-	-	-	2	2	1	5	3	5	7	21	**84%**
Websites	1	1	-	1	4	5	2	3	4	4	18	**72%**
Posters and Brochures	3	2	1	1	4	4	3	5	1	1	14	56%
Booklets and leaflets	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	5	1	1	12	48%
Short Stories	2	-	1	1	4	-	2	3	2	10	17	68%
Poems	4	2	-	2	1	2	2	2	6	4	16	64%
Cartoons	-	1	-	-	1	2	1	-	5	15	23	**92%**

Based on the students' rating of the suggested materials, their preference came as follows: 1- Cartoons 92%   2- TV. Programmes 88% 3- Video Clips 84% 4- Speech by a native speaker 76% 5- Magazines and Websites 72% 6- Short stories 68% 7- Poems 64% 8- Posters and Brochures 56% 9- Booklets and leaflets 48% 10- Newspaper 44% 11- Radio Broadcasting 28% (see Figure 1) .

Figure 1. Students' Interest in the Suggested Authentic Materials
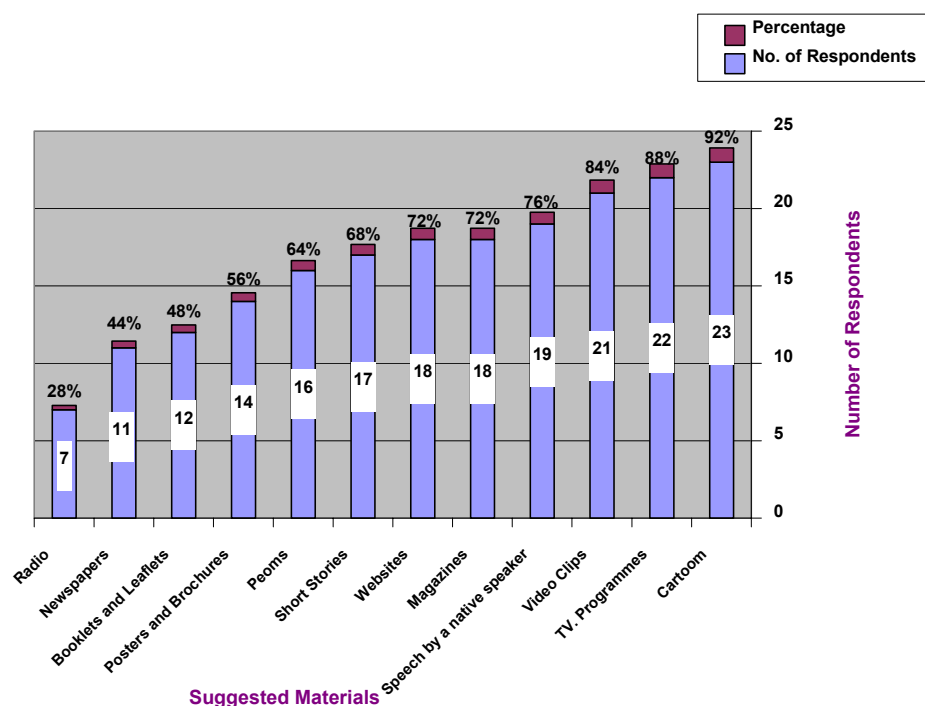
Many of the responses I got from the open-ended part of the survey revealed the students were excited about the idea of using authentic materials in class. Some of them gave helpful comments and suggestions that shed light on their needs, and the way they preferred the materials to be presented. One of them said "I hope I can speak the English people speak at street". Another one suggested: "show something related to our life". She added "I prefer interview because it is a good and a nice way". One of the most useful suggestions was "It's advisable ……. after every activity to discuss about it so as to get the biggest quantity of information".

In fact, these comments helped me decide on some considerations I needed to keep in mind when selecting the authentic materials and designing the activities. Basically, I realized that speaking was the skill my students needed to improve the most. However, because they had not been introduced to any authentic material in their English classes before, as they reported to me, I believed that pure listening to aural materials would be so hard for them. Hence, I decided to use audio / video ones that might be more inviting to them. Besides, I believed that once they have become acquainted with the spoken language of the native speakers, their speaking skill would be improved ultimately. Furthermore and based on the last comment, I decided to

design my activities in a way that would promote discussion, and encourage them speak up, and use the language.

3**.** Students' Evaluation of the Eight Authentic Materials Introduced.

Data in this category were gathered from a weekly review sheet in which students rated their interest in the activities and whether they had learned from them.

The evaluation sheet was designed to investigate whether the students liked the materials, and whether they had learned from them. Besides, it aimed at identifying things they had felt useful. The results indicated that my students found most of the classes to be interesting and useful. None of the two questions in the survey attracted a response less than 3.5 (see table 3).

Table 3. Students' Evaluation of the Authentic Materials Introduced

Activity	Statements	Rating Scale		Average Score
Video Clip	1- The activity was interesting. 2- The activity was useful.	Low 1 2 3	High 4 5	4.32 4.44
Magazine	1- The activity was interesting. 2- The activity was useful.	Low 1 2 3	High 4 5	3.96 4.20
Movie	1- The activity was interesting. 2- The activity was useful.	Low 1 2 3	High 4 5	4.48 4.36
TV. Programme	1- The activity was interesting. 2- The activity was useful.	Low 1 2 3	High 4 5	3.52 3.32
Products	1- The activity was interesting. 2- The activity was useful.	Low 1 2 3	High 4 5	3.80 3.80
Cartoons	1- The activity was interesting. 2- The activity was useful.	Low 1 2 3	High 4 5	4.28 4.12

A speech	1- The activity was	Low				High	4.52
by a native	interesting.	1	2	3	4	5	4.48
speaker	2- The activity was useful.						
Recorded	1- The activity was	Low				High	4.12
voice mail	interesting.	1	2	3	4	5	3.68
messages	2- The activity was useful.						

As it is clearly shown in the table, the most common response for the items about enjoyment and usefulness of the activities was 4. This finding was supported by comments in the open-ended question as will be presented in more details later on.

Apparently, the results revealed that there was a high correlation between interest and learning level of each activity. Based on the average score they got, the authentic materials came as follows: The Speech by a Native Speaker, the Movie, The Video Clip, the Cartoon, the Recorded Voice Mail Messages, the Magazine, the Products and the TV. Programme (see figure 2).

Figure 2. The Introduced Authentic Materials analyzed according to their Average Score.
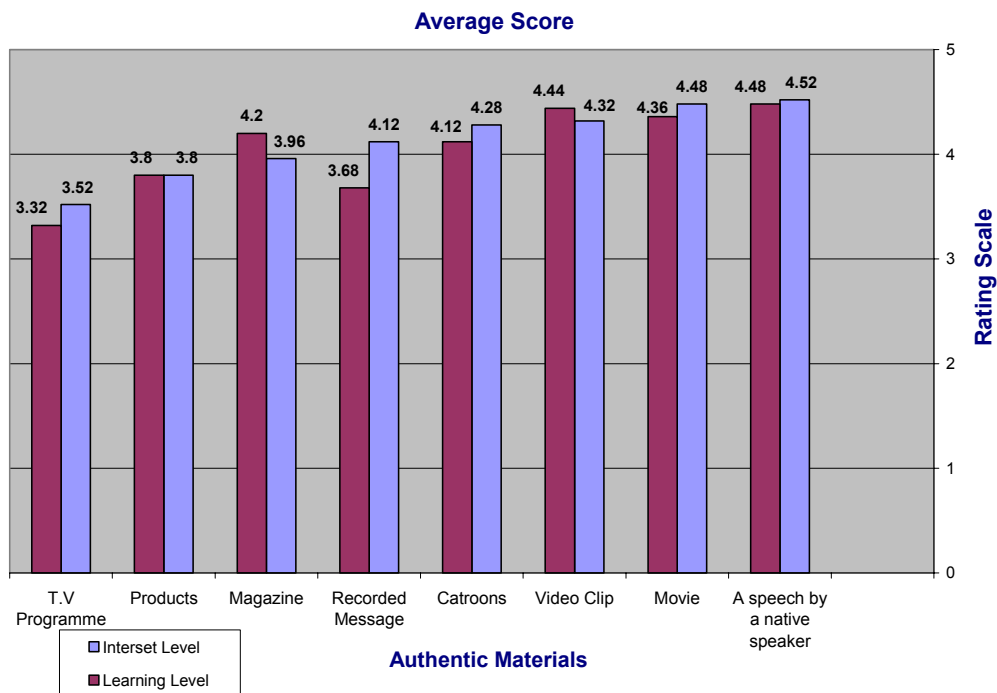
However, I am going to introduce the findings about the activities following the same order in which they were presented.

3.1 Activity One: The Video Clip

The material, as I have mentioned earlier, introduced the students to some interviews with nine American passers-by asking them to express their opinions about their favorite time of the year, and talk about the impact of its weather on their mood, and everyday activities and practices.

Given the fact that it was the first activity to be introduced, it was of crucial importance to choose a material that would be interesting, inviting and useful to my students. Thus, I was somewhat anxious and self conscious when I introduced it. The first time my students watched the video clip, I could read their blank stares and faces. They were watching attentively and quietly. It was really apparent that the material was eye-catching for them.

For the first instance, I thought the activity was too difficult. However, after watching the material two more times, I noticed how active, excited and engaged my students became when doing the tasks. The feedback I got about this class was really special in the sense that it was so encouraging for me. Indeed, it added new motives for me to pursue my study enthusiastically, and to be more creative. I still remember the first comment on the material from one of my students as it was really surprising. She said excitedly: "We don't want our textbooks any more."

Based on the students' responses in the close ended questions, the activity was of high interest to the majority of them, and it was very useful (see table3). Almost all the students agreed that the activity helped them describe the weather using new adjectives. One of them said: "I learned how to describe the weather better than before." Another one maintained: "I learned many adjectives that describe weather like over cast, energizing and crisp."

Furthermore, I believe the activity helped them improve their listening skill as indicated in the following comment: "I learnt how to listen to the video clips in English and understand them". Another one said: "I learned how to listen very well". Additionally, as the activity was based on listening, I feel it helped them improve their pronunciation. One of their comments was "I learned the pronunciation of some

words". Another one was "I learned how native speakers describe weather and pronounce letters".

More importantly, I believe the significance of this activity lied in the fact that it helped to raise the students' awareness of the impact of weather on people as shown in the following statement: "I learned that the weather effects the person very much". Hence, it seemed that this material helped the students in there ways: 1- It provided them with new vocabulary and expression native speakers use, when describing weather. In this respect, one of the students reported "I liked the sentence: yesterday was overcast, we were down. Today, it is bright, so we are all up again".

2- It provided them with a good listening practice which helped them improve their pronunciation too. 3- It introduced them to useful information related to the energy day life experiences of American people. In this respect, one of the students indicated "I learned many things like words, information about a foreign country maybe I will go to. So this information will help me. Also I listened to how they are talking in the street".

3.2 Activity Two: Dear Abby's Column in News Tribune Magazine

The idea of this activity was to introduce my students to some carefully-selected social problems people experience in the West, specifically, the USA. The main objectives of this activity were to allow my students to use pre-taught functions; mainly giving advice, making suggestion and expressing opinions, in context. Besides, it aimed at improving their writing skills through effective group work, and enhancing their critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Most of the students reported that it was a useful activity that helped them improve their ability to solve problems. On the weekly review sheet they indicated that they had learned that "there are many problems in the society, some are easy to solve and some are difficult" , how to "listen to others problem", how to "think deeply when facing problems in the future", and how to "give a good solution".

Another useful feature of this activity was that it showed the students how to look at a problem from different perspectives, and think of more than one possibility. More importantly, the students felt that it introduced them to the mentality of people in the West. One of the interesting comments was "I learned how English people think". It is worth mentioning in this respect, that the most exciting part of this

activity was when the students compared their responses with each other and with Abby's ones. Besides, as one of the students stated, the activity helped "get self – confidence when giving any one a solution"

In addition, most students agreed that this activity improved their reading and writing skills. One of them maintained, "I learned how to read carefully". Another student commented "I am really pleased to write because this make me better in writing". Another one echoed the same thought saying "it improved our skill in writing and how to express ourselves ". Furthermore, the activity provided them with the opportunity to "think together and cooperate".

However, I believe the importance of this activity lay in the fact that it provided the students with real situations in which the pre-taught functions were used. In other words, it provided them with the opportunity to identify how the functions they were already familiar with were used in context. One of the students commented, "I learned how Abby arranged the idea of advice". Another one said "I learned giving advice and suggestions to others".

3.3 Activity Three: The Movie, *Home Alone*

Although this activity was not included in the given list of the suggested authentic materials survey (see Appendix 2), it was introduced based on the discussion I had with my students. Having analyzed their responses in the open-ended question of the second survey, I came across the following suggestion" How about watching a film?". Hence, I proposed the idea. They liked it, and they all opted for a comedy. The film, Home Alone, was about an eight –year- old boy who was left behind by his family in Christmas, and could, after many funny incidents, meet with them.

Given the fact that the film was not translated into Arabic, most students stated that the activity mainly helped them improve their listening comprehension and pronunciation as shown in the following comment: "I learned how [native speakers] speak their language". Another student said: "This activity helped me understand how non-Arabic people talk". Another comment was "I understand what the people said in the film without translator". However, many students maintained that they had faced difficulty understanding every thing said in the film. One of the students commented:

"I really learnt how the native speaker speak, but I didn't understand everything because they spoke too fast".

Based on some of the students' responses, this activity introduced them to some aspects of American culture related to family relationships which was useful for them. One of the students commented: "I learned how they live and how the family are not linked together. Every one is alone". Another comment was "I learned the feeling of being alone". Hence, the activity helped to reinforce certain values such as "the importance of staying with [the] family", and "how to be responsible and genius when facing .. …problems". Furthermore, the activity provided the students with the opportunity to improve their writing abilities as they were asked to write a film review.

3.4 Activity Four: TV Program/*Oprah's Talk Show*

In this activity, the students were introduced to Oprah's weekly talk show on MBC 4 in which the reporter interviewed the actor Chris Rock and the famous young basketball player Lebrone James., and announced James Frey as the winner in her Book Club that week for his book: "A million Little Pieces".

Although the students' responses revealed that they found Oprah's and the interviewees language difficult as "they spoke very fast", they could learn some words, sentences and expressions they felt they would use in the future. One of the students commended: "I learned how to listen carefully and I know many words I can't understand before". Another student provided the following examples of those sentences and expressions: "Take a look at this", "This will affect me for the rest of my life", "That's my aspiration", "By being myself", "Was it too much too soon?".

According to some of the students, introducing them to such a program in which "important topics in society" were discussed was useful. One of the students indicated, "I learned how to make an interview". Another one maintained "I liked Oprah's questions very much". Thus, these comments showed clearly that the activity helped them learn how to conduct an interview. In other words, it helped them learn certain skills like how to be focused when addressing and answering questions, turn taking, how to read different types of non-verbal communication like gestures, eye contact, etc.

More importantly, the issues discussed in the program helped raise awareness among students about certain values. Examples of those issues were: Helping Hurricane Katrina's homeless victims, and the importance of nurturing one's own talents and working hard to achieve one's own ambition. One of the students said: "I learned that we mustn't distinguish between the black and wite people. We must help people in the wold".

Thus, I believe the activity helped introduce them to some aspects of the western culture, and provided them with the opportunity to compare them with the ones they have in their culture. One of the student commented" I liked that it talked about a lot of things related to our life". Furthermore, Oprah's Book Club, in which she publicized a worth reading book, shed light on the importance of reading. One of the students' most interesting comments was: "I learned that reading and having a good knowledge is a very good thing for my future".

3.5 Activity Five: Products.

Given the fact that most of the previously presented activities focused on the spoken language, I chose to introduce my students to the written language in order to maintain balanced exposure to both their listening and reading skills. Based on the results of the second survey, authentic materials such as newspapers, posters, brochures, booklets and leaflets were not favorable to my students (see table 2). Therefore, to review the language and functions often seen in these types of authentic materials in a manner interesting to my students, I decided to introduce them to some of the products I regularly use, for example shampoo and toothpaste, and then ask them to answer some questions related to its brand name, its ingredients and usage instructions.

According to students' responses, the activity helped them learn "how to read the information of the new items before buying them". One of the students commented: "I learned how to know about the products". Another one said: "I learnt that before I buy the product, I must read how I should use it".

Some students provided details of what they had learned. One of them said "I learned about chemical words, I have the skill now to read the chemical products". Another student stated: "I learned some words like Spa, moisturizing, rinse, formula, sensitive".

3.6 Activity Six: Cartoons/Cinderella

As my students were already familiar with the story, I decided to direct their focus and attention to the vocabulary, functions and expressions used in the film. Students watched the film and looked for the words, and expressions that conveyed the same meaning given in the work sheets (see Appendix 4.6),and then wrote their own stories and drew them. Examples of those expressions were: "Life is not fair," "If it takes me for the rest of my life, I will…," and "…occupy your mind." Another activity was to choose any scene, change its script, and act it out. However, students could not do it due to lack of time.

Based on the students' responses, the activity helped them improve their listening comprehension and provided them with useful vocabulary and expressions as shown in the following comment "I learned how to concentrate to understand better". Another one was "I learned how to listen carefully". One of the students commented "I liked the cartoon and I try to know everything in the film without translation". Another one said "I think it is a very important activity to improve our skills like speaking and listening and I loved the questions my teacher put about this cartoon which help me to learn new vocabulary.

Some students provided details of the vocabulary and expressions they had learned. One of them said: "I learned the words stepchild, stepmother, and purchase, misty, ball". It is worth mentioning here that students reported it was the first time they were introduced to the meaning of the word ball in that context, which was a dancing party. Another one indicated, "I learned some beautiful sentences that help me in the future in different situations like: "Life is not fair, if it takes me for the rest of my life, I will…."

More importantly, I believe the activity helped them identify how the functions they have been already familiar with were used in context. Examples of those expressions were: "It is lovely," expressing approval, "Who cares?" expressing indifference, and "you should do this more often," expressing giving advice. However, what was really interesting about the last expression, which the stepmother used when addressing Cinderella that the students could guess from the context that it meant irony. Besides, the activity introduced them to new expressions which they had not come across before. Examples of those functional expressions were: 'How can I

thank you?', expressing thanks and gratitude, and 'Would you do me a favor?', expressing polite request. I believe that such introduction has helped them feel that it would be likely to use them in similar situations in the future which was stimulating and encouraging for the students to learn them.

I feel the activity helped them improve their pronunciation as shown in the following comment, "I learned the way they pronounce the words". In addition, the students' comments suggest that the activity helped reinforce important values as revealed in the following statement "I learned that the person must be patient, and sisters must love each other". Another one was "I learned that the beauty is in the soul".

3.7 Activity Seven: A speech by a Native Speaker

This activity attracted the highest score by the students [see Figure 2]. It was a speech about how to get ready for university life delivered by Dr. Cindy Gunn, a Canadian native speaker, from the American University of Sharjah. Initially, the activity was supposed to last for 45 minutes, however it lasted for 90 minutes due to the fact that the activity was interesting and thought provoking for the students.

Based on my classroom observation and the feedback I got from them, it was the most enjoyable and useful class. According to their comments, the presenter was interesting and the topic discussed was relevant and important to them. One of the students said: "I think it was the most useful activity". Another one commented: "I liked Dr. Cindy, I dreamt the class will be longer". It is worth mentioning in this respect, that while Dr. Cindy was delivering the speech, nobody was taking notes although it was one of the intended activities and the students were reminded to do so several times. When asked later on, they justified that they did not want anything to distract them from listening to her.

I believe this activity helped my students in three ways: Firstly, it provided them with information about university life especially in the American University of Sharjah. Hence, as one student noted, they could see "the difference between school and university life". One of the students said: "I learned about new society in university. I learned about the friendship between the teacher and the students". Another student indicated: "I learned that students take courses and must study hard at university". Another one added "I learned there is exam before we join university".

Another comment was "I learned that the life in the university makes the person depends on himself". Furthermore, the activity helped them learn new words as shown in the following comment. "I learned the words co-education and plagiarism, I liked the sentence "violation of academic integrity".

Secondly, the activity enhanced their listening comprehension, pronunciation and speaking skills. One of the students commented: "I learned how to understand the native language". Another one said "I learned how to ask and speak to native speaker". Another interesting comment was "I learned how native speakers pronounce the sound ' r ' ".

Thirdly and most importantly, the activity offered the students a very good opportunity to express themselves, and share ideas with a native speaker. One of the students said: "I loved that I was sharing my ideas with others". Another one maintained "It was very nice to discuss and deal with native speaker". Furthermore, I believe that involving the students in that discussion has really fostered their self confidence as indicated in the following comment: "I learned how to express my thoughts and imagination, I have self-confidence when I answer". Another interesting comment was "I liked this class because I noticed that I can understand the native speaker very well, that makes me very, very happy".

3.8 Activity Eight: Recorded Voice Mail Messages

Having familiarized the students with the native speaker's language through aural/visual materials, I chose to introduce them to a purely aural activity. The activity introduced them to three voice mail messages recorded in three accents, Canadian, British and American. They varied in length, formality and word choice. The focus of the activity was to show those differences, and to provide students with an exercise to improve their pronunciation by asking them to record their own messages and compare them with each other.

All the students agreed that the activity was interesting and useful. They explained that it helped them improve their listening comprehension, speaking and pronunciation. One of the students commented: "I learned how to speak English and in the right way to record my message". Another one said "I learned how I can record my voice mail message". Furthermore, it helped them identify the different accents as

revealed in the following comment: "I learned the different accents, the most easier one in my opinion was the American".

Additionally, based on their responses, the activity helped the students recognize how people express themselves differently when recording their messages. One of the them said: "I learned that some people are different when I listened to their messages". Another student echoed the same thought saying "The activity helped me know different personalities of the speakers through their messages". Another comment was: "I learned the difference between formal and less formal messages".

However, I believe that the most interesting finding about this activity was the feedback I got about its relevance to them. One of the comment was "I learned many useful things related to real life. I hope to learn more things because it helps me in the future". Another comment was "The task was more related to our life".

4. Students' Overall Evaluation of all the Eight Presented Activities

Data in this part of the study were gathered by two vehicles. The first was a survey that was made up of three ended questions (See Appendix 5). The second was made up of 15 interviews. The survey was administered after students had finished all of the eight activities. It aimed at detecting their overall evaluation of the whole experience. In other words, it attempted to investigate positive and negative things they had experienced when doing the activities. Besides, it asked them to specify the most useful ones.

The interviews were conducted afterwards with 15 students of the three proficiency levels, excellent, intermediate and low. They were determined based on their course grades and classroom interaction. Their main purpose was to enhance my understanding of the impact of the authentic materials on each group of them. Furthermore, the interviews called for some clarification upon some interesting issues that some students had raised in their responses to the above mentioned survey.

4.1 Survey Findings

Most of the students' responses to the survey confirmed that the experience was rewarding for them in many ways. Firstly, most of them reported that the activities were varied and interesting. Thus, they enjoyed doing them. One of the students commented "I liked the varied materials". Another one said "The time left easily and usefully". Another comment was "I liked them because we broke the routine of the

daily classes". Furthermore, I believe that introducing authentic materials that appealed to the students helped create a positive attitude towards learning English among them as shown in the following comment "I liked the cartoons and this activity helped me to like English".

Secondly, the activities familiarized the students with the language of native speakers. Thus, they enhanced their abilities of understanding and speaking that language. Besides, they provided them with an excellent model that helped them improve their pronunciation. One of the students commented "I learned how can I talk fluently with native speakers". Another one said "I liked listening to non-Arabic people because I feel it helps me in life". Another comment was "I learned how to listen carefully to the English language". Additionally, I feel that such introduction to the language as it is used by its native speakers has encouraged the students to speak the language outside the classroom as indicated in this comment "I feel they help me to improve my four skills and I like authentic materials and they help me to communicate with foreign people. I start to speak English more out classroom".

Thirdly, as both, the materials and the tasks were authentic, I believe they have helped them realize how English is used in different domains in real life. In fact, this feature was one of the most interesting things students liked about those materials. One of them said "I liked giving the English language in varied areas". Another student commented "I enjoyed this materials…. We learned from them how English is used outside the school". I think that by presenting words, expressions, functions, and structures in context, the activity helped the students realize how they are used. One of the students' most interesting comments was "I learned structures in a different way". Besides, as the activities were not translated into Arabic, they helped enhance their ability to guess the meaning of words and expressions from context. One of the students commented "I try to know everything in the film without translation".

Fourthly, based on my classroom observation and the students' comments, I believe the activities promoted effective group work and helped enhance students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Given the fact that the tasks were related to real life experiences, they called for negotiation of meanings, and exchange of thoughts and feelings. In this way, I feel the activities have saliently encouraged co-operative learning and helped raise their interest and full engagement in them. One of

the students commented "I liked every thing because it help us how to solve problems". Another one indicated "I learned how to express my opinion". Moreover, as each activity incorporated a writing task, I believe the activities helped them enhance their reading and writing skills as shown in the following comment "They help me improve my reading-writing".

Fifthly, some students reported that they liked the activities because they presented many aspects of native speakers' life and culture as revealed in the following comment "I liked to know how people in another countries lived". Another one said "I learned many words and what happened in the world". Hence, I believe the activities have introduced them to new information and important values as they reported earlier in each activity.

Lastly and more importantly, I believe that the most useful feature of those activities was that they provided an unthreatening learning environment in which students realized more, the importance of the language. Besides, facing difficulties doing some of those activities made them aware of their proficiency level. In other words, this experience of self-assessment and evaluation had created the need and the motivation among them to improve their language skills. One of the students said "I learned that English is an important language and we must learn it". Another one commented "I learnt that I need to speak English well". Another comment was "I learnt how important to improve my four important skills". Yet, I believe that one of the most informative comments in this respect, was" I learned how to chlang difficult that I faced".

However, this does not mean that students did not experience any difficulties. Some of them reported that the main challenge for them was understanding the native speakers' language. One of them mentioned "I didn't like speaking too fast, I felt I don't know anything about English language". Another one commented, "Sometimes, they speak fast and they eat some letters … so we don't understand the word". Another comment was "Sometimes, I couldn't be happy because I can't remember what they say". Besides, some others indicated that "sometimes [they] found difficult words [they] couldn't understand".

Another difficulty the students faced was due to time pressure. Given the fact that the activities were given along with the very long workbook materials,

sometimes, students had to take three classes a day which added an extra burden on them. One of the students commented "I liked every activity, but the problem was in the short time". Another one said "…but the time was not helping".

Overall, the students' attitude towards the activities was positive. The majority reported that they found them to be useful and interesting. One of them commented: "I liked so much the experience because I learnt something meaning and beautiful". Another student echoed the same sentiment saying "It was so enjoyable…. I liked it and I learnt so much". Another comment was "we enjoyed our time…we got useful information".

4.2 Interview Findings

Although the responses to the overall evaluation survey indicated that all the students believed that the activities had helped them learn better and enjoy their time, it was important to find out if this positive impact was prevailing among the students of all the three levels and not just restricted to the excellent ones only. In fact, identifying weak and intermediate students' responses was of crucial importance to me as they were my target group. Their poor attitude towards learning English was the reason that initiated my interest in the study starting from the beginning. Besides, I wanted to identify more closely in what way those activities were useful and interesting, and how they were different from their counterparts in the workbook. Additionally, I wanted to find out answers for some inquiries I had after analyzing the students' responses to the questions of the survey.

Hence, I interviewed 15 students of different language proficiency levels; excellent, intermediate and low, five students for each. The interviews were conducted individually after they had completed the overall evaluation survey. Some of them were carried out in English and others were in Arabic based on the students' level and preference. Sometimes, students asked me to provide them with words to help them express their thoughts clearly.

As for their overall impressions and attitudes towards the activities presented, all the 15 students interviewed indicated that they "liked the idea" and that they "spent a nice time, and learned useful information that help [them] improve [their] language". One of the students commented "It was a nice experience. I was interested very much…. I learned many things. It was funny. I really loved it". Another student

said "I feel this project or activities are more interesting and useful than our syllabus". Another comment was "I think it is more useful and interesting than the book because it's varied".

"How did you benefit from the introduced activities?" was one of the inquiries I felt I needed to expand upon. Although all the students interviewed agreed that the activities helped them learn new words and expressions, there were some variations in their responses depending on their levels. For instance, excellent students indicated that the activities helped them improve their language skills, mainly speaking. Thus, unlike the workbook activities, they encouraged them to communicate in English outside the classroom, especially with native speakers.

When I asked one of them "In what way did the activities enable you to do so", she replied "I learned how native speakers speak and I spoke to Dr. Cindy. It helped me feel confident". Another student echoed the same thought. She said "The activities improved my reading and writing skills. It also make me understand the native speaker. It give me more confidence." Another interesting comment was" I learned many useful things like new vocabulary, how native speakers speak…also listening. It improve our skills and language".

In return, intermediate and week students maintained that the activities helped them improve their listening comprehension skill. One of the students stated that "The impact of using those materials was positive… truly, I benefited from them. Those activities helped me try". She explained in more detail, saying:

> Usually when I watch an English film, I read the translation, but when
> you hid the translation in Oprah's program, I tried to listen …. I
> benefited a lot. The activity helped me guess the meaning of the word and
> translate it into Arabic in mind. Also I liked the cartoons. I am weak at
> English, but I really learned a skill.

Another student expressed the same thought. She maintained, "I learned meanings of words …. When I see how the words are used, they stick in mind more".

Additionally, according to their responses, the activities helped them change their negative attitudes towards learning the language, and engaged them more in the English classes. One of the students said "They helped us learn more things …. We

liked the English language more. Now, I like to watch English and try to think deeply of the language and understand what I watch." Another student stated "I was very excited…. I saw the other students laughing when watching the film…. The activities encouraged me a lot to try to understand what is going on in the class." Another interesting comment was "The thing you experience is better than the thing you [passively] listen to".

As my main research question was the impact of using authentic materials on students' poor attitudes towards learning the language, I felt I needed to address it more directly. Hence, I asked them the following questions:

1. Did the activities help you change your attitude towards learning the English language?
2. Did they encourage you to improve your language skills?
3. Did the difficulties you had faced, stopped you from enjoying and benefiting from the activities?
4. Do you still feel English is too difficult to learn?

Surprisingly, all the students' responses were positive. One of the students replied affirmatively to the first and second question saying "Of course." Another student responded to the third and fourth question positively saying "On the contrary, I came to know that it is very easy to learn, but there were some words I didn't understand the meaning of".

In fact, all those positive comments about the presented activities raised my interest to know their distinctive features from my students' perspective. In other words, I wanted to know how they were different from the materials and activities in the workbook. All the students agreed that there was a salient difference. One of them said "It is a big different. It is more interesting and it change the routine we have every year." Another student commented "I think the book is boring and it is so silly…the activities you give us help pupils to think".

One of the most interesting findings in this respect was what the weak students indicated about their experience. They maintained that although they faced difficulties understanding the native speakers' language, they believed that the activities helped "showing the language in a different way." One of them commented "They are different and better than the book. We got information from them in an easier way.

When I watched the materials, I feel I still remember things better than the book."
Another one said "They are easier than what we have in the workbook. The workbook is cram full. The [authentic] activities are interesting and nice…. They helped us learn the language." Another student explained" The book is so difficult for me. First, I feel we don't get any benefit from the book. When I watched the film, I feel the language is very different, the syllabus is difficult." Another comment was "The textbook is not sufficient to learn the language. We only memorize the book".

Based on their responses and my classroom observation, I believe that difficulties started to decrease class after class due to the interest and need for improvement that those activities had created among them. Besides, according to one of their responses, "with [my] help and [their] friends' help [they] liked them and benefited from them so much".

However, what one of the excellent students had indicated was really surprising for me. I used to think that all my students prefer to learn structures through explicit teaching of grammatical rules and to practice through drills. But one of them said "I learned structures in a different way." When I asked her to explain, she added "I listen to how native speakers say the sentence and I use the same structure. I only change the words".

Another interesting finding about the distinctive features of the presented activities was their ability to promote effective group work. According to the responses of all the students interviewed, they helped them participate more actively. When I asked them to elaborate more by comparing this experience with the group work they usually had in the regular class, I got the following responses. One of them said "Each one of us can do the exercises in the workbook alone, but in the activities you presented we must give our opinions and co-operate to finish the work." Another one maintained "The activity need more thinking and imagination, it gave me more confidence to be the leader of the group." Another interesting comment was "The worksheets helped us express our opinions in English".

Hence, and based on those responses, it is obvious that, for the students involved in this study, the activities promoted active engagement in the group because they called for co operation, and exchange of thoughts and feelings. Besides, they

stimulated "discussion and imagination. Thus, "they made it easier for [them] to learn.".

To sum up, the findings revealed that the students liked the presented activities. Besides, it was noticeable that they did not find them overly difficult as they could do all the tasks. In fact, the suggestions they gave in the end of the interviews conformed to those findings. One of the students suggested "I will be grateful if the Ministry of Education change our syllabus." Another one stated "I suggest our teachers use them from primary". Another one echoed the same sentiment. She said" I liked the project a lot, I hope all teachers apply it." However, one of the most interesting suggestions was" We should present these activities in a way that does not affect the book." When I asked her to explain, she indicated "We were moving fast to finish the workbook."

5. Students' Attitudes Towards Using Authentic Materials in ESL Classes

Seeking comparative data, I used a post-questionnaire that aimed at investigating my students' attitudes towards using authentic materials in their English classes. The questionnaire was administered in week six after they had made the overall evaluation of all the eight authentic materials they had been introduced to. The questionnaire consisted of ten close-ended questions, with yes, somewhat, and no options, and an open ended question.

The open ended questions evolved around whether students felt using authentic materials was interesting and useful for them, and whether they presented the language they encounter outside the classroom. In addition, they tried to identify students' overall impression of using them. In other words, they tried to detect if students felt they could replace their text books. The open ended question provided them with the opportunity to give comments and suggestions that could shed light on the best way to use authentic materials, and the limitations that teachers need to take into account when incorporating them in their classrooms. The following table summarizes the findings (see table 4).

Table 4: Students' Attitudes towards Using Authentic Materials (N=25)

Questions	Yes	Somewhat	No
1) Do you feel using authentic materials is interesting?	20 **80%**	5 20%	0 0%
2) Do you think it is useful?	19 **76%**	6 24%	0 0%
3) Do you believe authentic materials help you learn English better?	21 **84%**	4 16%	0 0%
4) Do they make you become more interested in the language?	14 **56%**	11 44%	0 0%
5) Do they help you learn native-like language?	19 **76%**	5 20%	1 4%
6) Do you think they may help you understand the language spoken outside classroom?	8 32%	16 64%	1 **4%**
7) Do you feel the activities have introduced you to situations similar to those in the real world?	9 36%	14 56%	2 **8%**
8) Do you think they can replace textbooks?	6 24%	4 16%	15 **60%**
9) Do you believe they should be used on a regular basis?	13 52%	11 44%	1 4%
10) Is your overall impression of using authentic materials favorable?	19 **76%**	6 24%	0 0%

     The findings showed that the students had a very positive attitude towards using authentic materials in the English classroom. The majority of them 20 (80%) felt that using them is interesting. An almost similar number (19) believed that using them is useful. Out of the 25 students surveyed, 21 (84%) believed that authentic materials help them learn English better, and more than half of them 56%, believed that they help them learn native-like language. As for their impact on students' motivation, 76% thought that they help increase their interest in learning the language.

As for authentic materials' relevance to real-life, only 1 student disagreed that they might help them understand the language spoken outside classroom. Out of the 25 students surveyed, only 2 disagreed that the activities have introduced them to situations similar to those they encounter in the real world.

60% of the students disagreed that authentic materials could replace textbooks. However, more than half of them, 52% believed that they should be used on a regular basis. Hence, the findings revealed that introducing authentic materials had a positive impact on them. According to the students' responses to the last close-ended question, 76% (= 19) maintained that their overall impression of using authentic materials is favorable.

Students' responses to the open ended question confirmed to theirs in the close-ended ones. Most students indicated that they liked the presented materials, and learned from them. However, most of their comments emphasized that they cannot replace the textbook. One of the students said "I believe that we can't study English from Authentic Materials only, we must study also English book". Another student commented "It is useful, but can not replace the textbook." Another important comment was "I need the book and the materials because the materials complete the information we need."

I feel that the most significant comments and suggestions were those related to considerations teachers need to bear in mind when using authentic materials. One of the students suggested "Why not involving the students more in preparing the activities?" Another one said "I suggest a long time." Another important comment was "I like thise materials and I want thise materials be about the book. I suggest that this materials to be given throughout the whole year."

I believe the importance of this comment relied in its implications. The first one is that teachers should incorporate authentic materials that supplement and support the textbook they teach. The second one is that teachers should use them regularly. Another significant comment had an implication for book designers. One of the students said, "I think we should use thiese materials inside the book." As the comment implied, English second language course books designers need to incorporate authentic materials or at least, adapt from them.

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To conclude, the findings clearly conformed to what has been said in the literature about the merits of using authentic materials in ESL classrooms. The findings revealed that the experience of using authentic materials in my classes was rewarding for my students and even for me. On the one hand, the authentic materials introduced have raised their interest in learning the language as they were interesting and stimulating. On the other, they were beneficial.

Based on the findings, the presented authentic materials were useful for my students in many ways. Firstly, they introduced them to the native speaker's spoken language. I believe this introduction has familiarized them with the supra segmental features of the language such as stress, intonation, rhythm etc. which helped them improve their pronunciation. Moreover, it gave them the confidence to speak English outside the classroom as reported by many of them.

Secondly, using authentic materials helped the students learn new words, expressions and functions in a more authentic way. In other words, they helped them identify how a word might have more than one meaning depending on the context. Furthermore, they helped them recognize how some expressions and functions are used in real –life situations.

Thirdly, the activities helped them improve their reading and writing skills. Besides, they provided them with new information and important values through exposing them to the culture of the language. Such exposure has raised their interest in learning the language, and has reinforced their critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Lastly, the activities provided the students with a good opportunity to assess their language proficiency level, and work hard to improve their language skills and performance. In short, the experience was really rewarding not only for them, but also for me. On the one hand, it provided me with some freedom to teach my students according to my teaching philosophy which, in some occasions, contradicts with the practices imposed on me because of the poor text book I have to teach. On the other hand, it let me feel that I was doing something worthwhile that my students were really appreciating as revealed in the following comment" Thank you Miss for every thing you do for us"

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

1. Summary of Conclusions

As a teacher, an exciting and useful aspect about the findings of the study was that they enabled me to understand my students' needs and interests more. Thus, they helped me set priorities regarding teaching techniques and materials selection to help the students gain maximum benefit from their English classes. The findings revealed that in addition to learning from the introduction of activities using authentic materials my students also liked and enjoyed the activities.

Based on the students' responses, the appeal of the activities were that they were "varied" and within the students' language proficiency levels and as such, the activities helped them "change the routine" of the daily ordinary classes.. Thus, they attracted the students' attention and could stimulate their interest in the language, especially among those who had poor attitude toward learning it. The students' feedback support Cheung's (2001) observation that " since students who lack intrinsic motivation often desire variety, excitement, and novelty, effective teachers should choose different teaching methods and learning materials that will motivate their students"(p.58).

Furthermore, as most of the students reported, they liked that the activities had introduced them to the language of native speakers of English, specifically North American speakers. The students explained that this introduction has helped them learn about some native speakers' lifestyles, the way they think, their values, and problems they face in their community. According to the students, all that information was useful and exciting to them in the sense that it helped them see the similarities and differences between their own Arabic culture and the target language culture. Thus, it appears that the authentic materials used have, as Spelleri (2002) proposed , promoted real language that is rich in context and culturally relevant.

Additionally, according to their responses, the students emphasized that introducing them to the native speakers' spoken language had assisted them improve their pronunciation, listening, and speaking skills. Thus, they encouraged them to use the language outside the classroom. The findings support Morely and Guarient's

(2001) notion that authentic materials "give the learner the feeling that he or she is learning the" real" language : that they are in touch with a living entity, the target language as it is used by the community which speaks it" (p. 347).

Besides, the findings showed that the activities were not overly difficult. Based on their responses, the students indicated that they helped them learn new words, expressions, and functions in a better way as they presented them in context. Thus, the activities helped them realize how they were used.

More importantly, as the activities were authentic in that they were related to real life experiences, they promoted effective group work. It was noticeable that the activities stimulated cooperation and discussion. Thus, they helped enhance students' critical thinking, and problem solving skills.

However, there was another interesting finding that clarified the students' positions more. Although almost all of them agreed that the introduced authentic materials and activities were interesting and useful, the majority, 60%,disagreed that authentic materials could replace their textbooks.

They explained that authentic materials could be used as a supplement "to complete the information in the book". One of the students suggested incorporating them inside the textbook. Another one stated that "we can't use authentic materials only because we need to learn structures". This implies that if teachers hope to get the best outcome from authentic materials, materials selected should be closely related to the points and topics discussed in the students' textbook.

All in all, just as found in the literature, the research findings stress the effectiveness of using authentic materials in an ESL classroom. Based on the findings, authentic materials, if carefully selected and planned for, and if appropriately used, can enhance learners' linguistic knowledge and communicative competence. Besides, they are likely to arouse students' interests, enhance their motivation, and, although not shown explicitly in this study, foster their autonomy.

2. Implications

I believe the significance of this study lies in its pedagogical implications for all those who are concerned about, and interested in improving ESL teaching and learning in the UAE, particularly in high schools. Based on my experience as an English teacher who has been teaching English for 16 years now, I can confidently

say that the issue of enhancing ESL teaching through using authentic materials has not been given the attention it deserves.

Indeed, I have not observed any teacher using them in her classroom, nor have I attended any workshop or training program arranged by the English supervisors, that has discussed this important topic, or shed light on its effectiveness. Hence, I think that the Ministry of Education, English supervisors, teachers and even learners need to devote considerable thought and time to such an essential issue.

2.1 Implications for the Ministry of Education

As the curriculum is one of the basic cornerstones of any educational institution, it is time that the Center for Curriculum & Instructional Materials Development in the Ministry of Education takes serious actions to improve the quality of our locally- made English course books. Based on our experience as language teachers, and the comments we get from our students and their parents, the textbooks are not as helpful as they could be. Unfortunately the course books are made up of fabricated texts that are of no interest or relevance to our students. More importantly, they do not present the linguistic features of the language in integration. In other words, the vocabulary, structures and functions are introduced in a decontextualized manner. Thus, students are not introduced to the pragmatics of the language. Besides, idioms are almost absent in these textbooks which means that the materials in the textbooks do not present the language in the same way as it is used in real life.

Another salient weakness of the textbooks is that they are filled with content that encourages memorization of knowledge about the English language. Thus, the materials of the textbooks do not help students recognize how the language functions, or motivate them to learn it or use it outside the classroom.

These weaknesses raise valid doubts about the effectiveness of the current textbook materials in teaching the language. Hence, I believe that textbook designers in the Ministry should take all these considerations into account. I think they need to replace the existing textbooks with more useful ones that incorporate authentic materials. As noted earlier, some students do not want to learn without a textbook, but they also want the benefits of authentic materials.

More importantly, I believe the authority in the Curriculum Department should follow an open-door policy. This entails showing more flexibility and providing more freedom for teachers and supervisors to eliminate, add or adapt materials in their textbooks. Even more, I strongly believe that teachers should be given the opportunity to take an active part in the curriculum design and development process. Given the fact that they live the reality of language teaching in schools, I feel they can be the best ones to provide the best recommendations for making effective corrective measures. Hence, they should be fully encouraged and supported with all the resources available to improve their performance.

2.2 Implications for English Supervisors

In return, supervisors need to provide the same freedom for their teachers, and even support them to adapt the materials they teach in response to their student's needs. I believe that when it comes to effective textbooks, supervisors should always take into account that quality is more important than quantity. Thus, they should not put teachers under much pressure in the plea that students should complete all the syllabus.

Additionally, since supervisors are fully a ware of the weaknesses of our textbooks, they should help teachers find ways to remedy them. Hence, I believe that they should place the issue of improving the quality of teaching textbook materials at the top of their priorities. Based on the findings of my study, I strongly believe that incorporating authentic materials can be one of the most effective ways to do so.

Following from this, supervisors are highly recommended to include this important issue in their agenda for teachers' professional development programs which need to be highly systematic and down to earth. Furthermore, they need to encourage teachers to use authentic materials in their classrooms, or even make it one of the assessment criteria when visiting them.

2.3 Implications for English Teachers

As seeking effective language teaching is the ultimate goal we all, language teachers, need to strive to achieve, I think it is time that we reconsider some of our teaching philosophies, attitudes and practices. More specifically, I feel we need to think more deeply, and compare them to the roles we need to play as language

teachers. It is true that we are helplessly tight to many limitations due to the Ministry and schools' top-down policies; however, I believe the change starts from within.

I think some of these main attitudes are related to the way we deal with the textbooks we teach which definitely has its negative impact on our practices in the classroom. Although we work under a lot of pressure due to over burdening duties and time constraints, I believe we need to get rid of the spoon feeding approach to teaching that many of us have ended up doing. Furthermore, I think we need to adopt more creative teaching techniques to reduce the negative impact of those weaknesses of the textbooks.

Given the fact that our textbooks do not help us teach the language sufficiently does not mean that our students need to pay the price. We are all quite aware of the poor learning outcomes they get after graduating from high school, especially those related to low language proficiency levels. Unfortunately, most of them, including excellent ones, end up being unable to use the language effectively.

Hence, based on the findings I got from my study, I strongly believe that teachers should enhance their students' speaking skills first as this can foster their self confidence, and stimulate them to improve the other skills. Besides, teachers are strongly recommended to introduce their students to the language native speakers' use in real life. I think that by incorporating authentic materials in supplement to their textbooks, and by assigning authentic and thought provoking tasks, students can be familiarized with the language they believe they will need in the future. Thus, these activities will increase their interest in learning the language, and motivate them to improve their proficiency levels.

However, they need first to identify learning objectives, design tasks, and decide on the way the materials are approached so that selected materials can best fit the teaching/ learning process. Since teachers cannot entirely get rid of the prescribed textbook they teach, it is really important that they introduce authentic materials in a regular basis in their classrooms because as Hall (2001) indicated" if we are going to help our students succeed in learning a language we must prepare them for the opportunities which will come outside the classroom" (p. 230).

2.4 Implications for Second Language Learners

Since learners are also aware that their textbooks do not help them improve their communicative competence, they are strongly recommended to seek opportunities of language practice outside the classroom. In other words, they should spare no effort to get in contact with the English language in the real world. Examples of such interaction can be through reading English newspapers, magazines, and short stories, watching English films and TV programs, using websites, and speaking to native speakers. In this way, they can realize how the language is used in real life, and thus learn it simultaneously.

2.5 Implications for Commercial Course Books' Designers

Although many of the commercial language teaching series are helpful and of a very good quality, I feel they are still not sufficient. Ideally speaking, one of the most important features of any language teaching material should be its ability to show its learners how the language functions in context. Besides, it should introduce them to the language they may encounter in real life. Thus, it needs to present a very close, if not an identical language, with the one used in the real world.

This implies that although using scripted texts that present the language interaction as smooth and predictable is helpful, it can not be realistic. For instance, contrived listening texts which lack important linguistic features are unlikely to prepare learners to the spoken language they will encounter in the future. Hence, textbook designers who feel reluctant to incorporate authentic materials in the plea that they are too difficult to understand, time consuming, and more costly, are recommended to take the risk as they are really rewarding.

2.6 Implications for Test Makers

Given the fact that assessment is the vehicle by which examiners can decide on the extent to which the teaching objectives have been achieved, I believe they have the most influence on instruction and curriculum design. For instance, if the main target of language proficiency assessment is to evaluate how exam takers are capable of using the language in different life domains, teaching methods, and curriculum materials should provide them with all the necessary skills to do so. In fact, this consideration is of crucial importance if the language assessment is to be valid and transparent.

Following on from this, I believe that if the main goal of any language assessment is to evaluate examinees' communicative competence, assessment instruments should be directed to assess their performance use of the language. This means that they should not be textbook based. In other words, they should not focus only on how much test takers had known or learnt about the language. Rather, they should assess what they can do with it. Hence, assessment tasks need to be more authentic in the sense that they should resemble the ones in real life. This implies that if assessment practitioners took this issue into account, language teachers and course book designers would re evaluate their philosophies and practices. In other words, I believe they wouldn't stick to the prescribed materials only. Rather, they would feel that incorporating authentic materials, which help enhance learners' communicative competence, has become inevitable.

3 Limitations of the Study.

Although I was really enthusiastic and excited about conducting my research study, I faced some challenges. I feel the main difficulty can be attributed to time constraints. Given the fact that I presented the activities using authentic materials along with the lengthy textbook I teach, I had to teach extra hours which put me under much pressure, and added extra burden on me, and to a certain extent, my students.

Following from this, I faced the difficulty of arranging for those extra teaching hours. Given the fact that all what matters for the administration, supervisor and even the students was to finish the syllabus, there were times in which I felt frustrated. However, with the co-operation of my colleagues who taught the same class, I could overcome this problem. In future classes, the time problem could be overcome by offering the activities on a smaller scale. For example, instead of watching the entire movie, the students could watch one short scene.

Another obstacle was lack of resources and facilities. Unfortunately, neither the Educational Department in the Ministry of Education, nor the schools provide their English teachers with such materials. I assume the reason might be lack of awareness of the importance of using them in teaching the language among people in the Ministry, the supervisors and the administrators. Indeed, given the fact that people in the field of education in general, and ESL teaching in particular here in the UAE, are textbook oriented, such issue is almost absent in their agenda for professional

development. Even when teachers come up with their own initiatives they are unlikely to get real support.

Hence, I had to provide my own materials. I got the video clip from one of my friends, and I bought and tape recorded the others. It is worth mentioning in this respect that I could not use the website as an authentic material in the study although it was one of the most interesting materials for my students. The reason was that my school did not have internet access then. But, with the enthusiasm and persistence I had for my study, I could manage and provide the materials I needed.

However, and though the findings revealed that my study was for the benefit of my students as they enjoyed the use of authentic materials, and learned from them, I believe there are still some areas that need to be investigated in more depth. Given the fact that the duration of the study was six weeks, I feel a more extended study can be done to enhance a better understanding of the impact of using authentic materials on ESL learners. In other words, I believe further study is needed to specify and identify more closely, and in more details, how authentic materials can be best exploited to improve the learning of the language skills. Furthermore, I think that whether or not it would be useful to introduce authentic materials in the early learning stages, can be a good research inquiry. Thus, I recommend that primary teachers conduct a similar study in their schools.

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Appendix 1

Students' Attitudes Towards Grade 11 English Textbook

Name:- (optional) --

You are kindly requested to tick (√) your answer to the following questions.

Questions	Yes	Somewhat	No
1) Do you think the content of the textbook is interesting? هل تعتقدين بأن محتوى الكتاب مشوق؟			
2) Do you think it is relevant to your every day life experiences? هل ترين بأنه مرتبط بخبرات حياتك اليومية؟			
3) Do you think the textbook provides you with sufficient activities? هل تعتقدين أن أنشطة الكتاب كافية وتفي بالغرض؟			
4) Do you think these activities are varied and stimulating? هل تعتقدين بأنها متنوعة ومحفزة ومثيرة للدافعية لديك؟			
5) Do they help you learn the language effectively? هل تساعدك على تعلّم اللغة بفعالية؟			
6) Do the textbook materials help you recognize how the language functions? هل تساعدك مادة الكتاب على إدراك وتمييز وظائف اللغة؟			
7) Do you think they present the language as it is used by its native speakers in real-life situations? هل تعتقدين بأنها تقدم اللغة كما يستخدمها متحدثيها الأصليين في مواقفهم الحياتية؟			
8) Do they introduce you to the culture of the language? هل تعرفك على الثقافة المتعلقة باللغة؟			
9) Do they help you use the language outside classroom? هل تساعدك هذه المواد على استخدام اللغة خارج الفصل أي في المجتمع الخارجي؟			

Any other comments on the textbook?

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Appendix 2

Students' Interest in the Suggested Authentic Materials

Name:- (optional) --

You are kindly requested to rate your degree of interest in the following authentic

materials.

Speech by a Native Speaker 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Radio Broadcasting 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Video Clips 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Websites 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Newspapers 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Booklets and leaflets 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Magazines 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Posters and Brochures 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Short stories 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Poems 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

TV Programmes 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Cartoons 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments and Suggestions (if any):-

Appendix 3

Weekly Review Sheet

Day and date: --

Type of authentic material used: --

Allotted time: ---

Activity: ---

Please rate your interest in this activity.

     1   2   3   4   5

- Did this activity help you learn?

     1   2   3   4   5

- What did you learn?

Appendix 4

The Introduced Activities

Appendix 4.1 Activity one: Describing Weather.
1 – <u>Look at the following pictures and describe them</u>.

2 – <u>Watch the following video clip , and answer the following questions</u>.
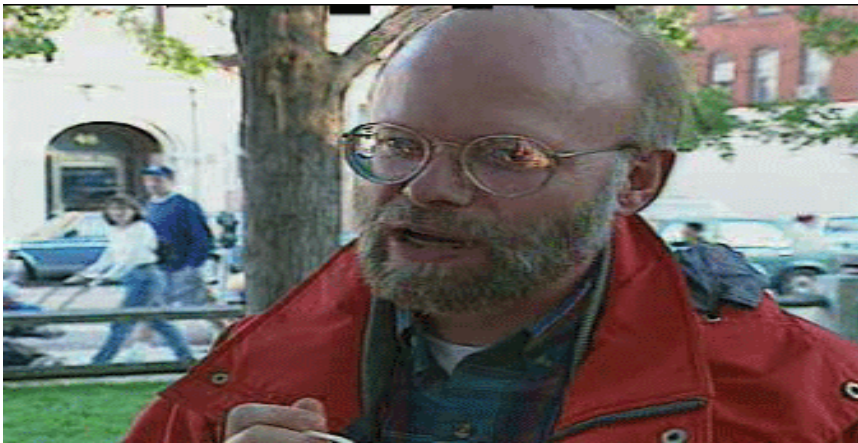
1 – What, according to John are the two kinds of weather they have in Washington?
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2 – Why does Peter like to look at the whole country map?
……………………………………………………………………………………..
3 – How does Brian get his information about the weather?
………………………………………………………………………………………
4 – Why does Ellen call up three times a day to listen to the weather forecast?
………………………………………………………………………………………
3 – <u>Watch the video clip again and complete the following table.</u>

Words that describe weather		
1	6	11
2	7	12
3	8	13
4	9	14
5	10	15

<u>3.2 – In groups, write a paragraph describing the weather today and planning for activities you can practice.</u>

Appendix 4.2, Activity Two: Dear Abby's Column in News Tribune

Imagine that you were in Abby's place. How would you respond to the following readers' letters?

Problem: 1

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Problem: 2

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Problem: 3

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Appendix 4.3 Activity Three: A Comedy Film   - Home Alone \ Part 1

1- Look at the poster, read the title and guess the story of the film.

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2– After watching the film, in groups, summarize the main events.

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3- What is it you liked about the film, and what is it you did not?

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4– Choose any scene, rewrite the conversation using your own words, and then act it out.
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Appendix 4.4 Activity Four: TV Program \ Oprah Talk Show.

1 – After watching the program, what are the main issues discussed?
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2 – Has the program introduced you to the West Culture, if so, how?
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3 – What is it that makes Oprah's program so interesting and special?
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4 – Write down words or sentences you feel like using in the future?
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Appendix 4.5 Activity Five: Products.

Read the information found on each product, and answer the following questions.

1 – What is the brand name of the product?

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2 – Where is it made in?
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3 – What are its ingredients?
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4 – How should it be used?
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5 – Do you feel like trying this product?
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Appendix 4.6 Activity Six: Cartoon Film \ Cinderella

A. Watch the cartoon and find out the relevant words for the following definitions

1. ……………. the child of one's husband / wife by an earlier marriage.
2. ……………. to clean by hard rubbing as with a stiff brush.
3. ……………. now – without delay.
4. ……………. to buy.
5. ……………. A large formal occasion for social dancing.
6. ……………. To destroy and spoil completely.
7. ……………. Not clear to the mind.

B. Watch the film, listen carefully, and find out the expressions that convey the following meanings

1 – Clean something thoroughly.
………………………………………………………………………….

2 – Deserving to be thought of.
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3 – Life does not give you everything.
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4 – I am really grateful to you.
…………………………………………………………………………

5 – To wait for something eagerly.
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6 – I am determined to find you.
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C. Imagine your own story, write it down and draw it.
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Appendix 4.7 Activity Seven: A speech by a native speaker.
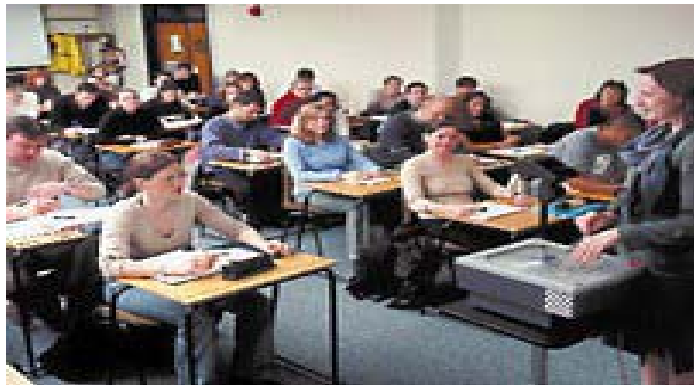
1 – What questions might you have about university life?

1 -…………………………………………………………………………………………….
2 - …………………………………………………………………………………………….
3 - …………………………………………………………………………………………...
4 - …………………………………………………………………………………………….
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8 - …………………………………………………………………………………………...
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10-…………………………………………………………………………………………….

2 – Listen carefully to the speech and take notes.

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Appendix 4.8 Activity Eight: Voice Mail Messages.

1 – Listen to the following recorded voice mail messages, write them down and try to identify the accent of the speaker.

Message 1

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Message 2

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Message 3

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2 – Write your own message and record it.

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Appendix 5

Overall Evaluation Sheet

1) What did you like about the materials and activities introduced?

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2) What did not you like?

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3) What were the most useful activities for you, and why?

1- ---

2- ---

3- ---

4- ---

Appendix 6: Interview Questions

1- What is your overall impression of the offered activities?

2- How were they different from the activities in the workbook?

3- Did the difficulties you had faced, stopped you from enjoying and benefiting from the presented activities?

4- Did they encourage you to improve your language skills.

5- Did they help you change your attitude towards learning the language?

6- Do you still feel English is too difficult to learn?

Appendix 7

Students' Attitudes Towards Using Authentic Materials

Name:- (optional) ---

You are kindly requested to tick (√) your answer to the following questions.

Questions	Yes	Somewhat	No
1) Do you feel using authentic materials is interesting?			
2) Do you think it is useful?			
3) Do you believe authentic materials help you learn English better?			
4) Do they make you become more interested in the language?			
5) Do they help you learn native-like language?			
6) Do you think they may help you understand the language spoken outside classroom?			
7) Do you feel the activities have introduced you to situations similar to those in the real world?			
8) Do you think they can replace textbooks?			
9) Do you believe they should be used on a regular basis?			
10) Is your overall impression of using authentic materials favorable?			

Comments and Suggestions (if any)

VITA

Amal Thabit is an ESL teacher who currently works at Asma Bint Ommais High School in Ajman, UAE. She got her B.A. in English Language and Literature in 1990 from the United Arab Emirates University in Al-Ain. After graduation, she worked as a language teacher in a couple of schools in Ajman. She participated in organizing the Hands-On English Conferences held in 2002, 2003, and 2004 as part of Ajman's Educational Zone Professional Development Programs for English language teachers.

She also presented some papers in school and those conferences. The first paper was in 1999 entitled "E-learning." The second one was in 2002 entitled "Brainstorming," and the last one was in 2004 entitled "Reflective Teaching." She is a member of TESOL Arabia, and her main areas of interest are Reflective Teaching, Exploratory Practice, and Second Language Learning Motivation.