

A Content Analysis of the Literary Texts' Authenticity in Students' English Textbooks "English for Iraq" of Iraqi Preparatory Schools

By

Ula Mahdi Rahman¹

¹College of Basic Education, University of Babylon, Iraq.

Corresponding Author's Email: Ola.rahman.h21bed62@student.uobabylon.edu.iq

Asst. Prof. Dr. Muna Mohammed Abbas²

²College of Basic Education, University of Babylon, Iraq.

Asst Prof. Dr. Hadeel Aziz Mohammed Ridha³

³College of Basic Education, University of Babylon, Iraq.

Abstract

Researchers use content analysis to analyze a wide range of data about various educational topics. In this research, the researcher has used content analysis to check the availability of authentic aspects within the literary texts of the "English for Iraq" preparatory level. The researcher has adopted a combined criteria of authenticity to act as the analytical tool. A method of analysis is utilized (qualitative) to make accurate inferences from the analytical data. The analysis results refer to the availability of authentic aspects within the literary texts across the textbook.

Keywords: Content analysis, Texts, Authenticity, Criteria of authenticity and Literary texts.

1. Introduction

Every language transmits culture; in fact, culture and language are strongly intertwined. According to Kramsch (1998), no one can use or learn a language unless they are familiar with the culture of its speakers. Foreign language textbooks, whether written or visual, may then modify culture(s) buried in their linguistic content (p.63). Since all "teaching materials (e.g. textbooks) directly or indirectly transmit cultural values to a certain degree" and particularly textbooks do communicate explicitly or implicitly "sets of social and cultural values which are inherent in their make-up" (Cunningsworth,1995, p. 90).

Textbooks remain an important part of the English language teaching and learning processes; in the words of Hutchinson and Torres (1994), "No teaching-learning situation, it seems, is complete unless it has its relevant textbook." (p. 315)

In both public and private schools in Iraq, teaching English is a textbook-based process, since no resources other than textbooks are allowed. In Iraq, the EFL context includes the "English for Iraq" textbook series, which has been in use since 2014 and is written by international authors. In all Iraqi primary, intermediate, and preparatory (pre-university) schools, these textbooks are the only source of information on studying English. Preparatory schools are three-grade schools with students ranging in age from 16 to 19.

The textbook is claimed to suit the demands of both the students and teachers by offering a teacher's book and a student's book with a supplemental activity book and audios for native speakers (Altae,2020, p.2).

English in Iraq is considered as a foreign language where students lack the real opportunity to use the language in their daily lives outside the classroom. English language class might be the only environment with the opportunities to use the target language effectively and develop their communication skills. To use English for communicative purposes, students should be exposed to authentic materials that allow them to utilize the target language in real-world contexts.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Since textbooks are useful tools that help English teachers bring real-life communication into the classroom, decision makers and syllabus designers should think about how important it is to include authentic materials within text-based materials when making an English textbook.

A textbook should help the student learn English and reach his or her goal. Since English is a language, the material should help students use language as a way to talk to each other. Its true that textbooks can help either the teacher or the student learn a language. Textbooks make it easier for teachers to plan lessons because they come with ready-made materials. They also tell students how to do their work and how hard it is, so they can figure out on their own how much they have learned and mastered.

Morrow (1977, p.13): 'An *authentic text* is a stretch of real language, produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort.' A text is considered authentic when it meets the criteria of authenticity made by McGrath (2002). According to McGrath (2002), while selecting relevant authentic texts, eight elements of authenticity must be examined.

These are: (1) relevance to the course book and the needs of the learners, (2) topic interest, (3) cultural appropriateness, (4) logistical issues, (5) cognitive demands, (6) linguistic demands, (7) quality, and (8) exploitation. Regarding prepared materials for EFL contexts such as Iraq, Graves (2000) argues that materials must be selected according to the idea of authenticity, so that students are exposed to language as it is used in the actual world. According to Horwitz (2008), learners have diverse requirements and objectives, which play a significant role in developing resources. Due to the personal experience, interviews with teachers and supervisors as well as reviewing the previous studies, it has been noticed by the researcher, that there is a gap between the language used inside the classroom and the language used outside the classroom in real life, and this is against the nature of authentic texts.

Therefore, the researcher is interested in performing a study analyzing the literary texts included in the preparatory "English for Iraq" textbooks in order to determine how consistent the present literary texts are with the requirements for authenticity.

In this study, the researcher tries to answer these questions:

- 1- What are the authenticity criteria that should be available in the literary text in "English for Iraq" textbook for the preparatory stage?
- 2-To what extent are the current literary texts in "English for Iraq" textbook of preparatory stage compatible with the criteria of authenticity and its subcomponents?

2. Literature Review and Previous Studies

2.1 Content Analysis

Content analysis is a method that uses specialized steps. It can be seen and taken apart from the researcher's authority. As a research method, content analysis gives the researcher new ideas, helps them understand a certain phenomenon better, or suggests actions they can take. Content analysis is a tool used in the sciences (Krippendorff, 2004, p.18).

According to Cohen et al. (2007, p.475), content analysis is the process of summarizing and interpreting written data. In a more specific sense, it is "a strict and systematic set of procedures for rigorous analysis, examination, and verification of the content of written data".

Qualitative content analysis is an "approach of experimental, conceptually guided analysis of texts in the context of communication, following content analytical guidelines and step-by-step models, and avoiding hasty quantification." (Drisko & Maschi, 2016, p.6).

2.2 Text

The text is a "communicative event where in linguistic, cognitive and social actions convergence, and not just a sequence of words that were uttered or written". A collection of linguistic, cognitive, and social behaviors, and as such, it should be seen as a model for comprehending the universe. (De Beaugrande, 1997, p.11)

Togebly (2014, p.2) suggests that there are types of texts,

1- Practical Texts. They are often written for people who have roles, rights, and responsibilities in institutions, organizations, society, and culture.

2- Factual Prose it's supposed to be a true representation of the things that are being talked about.

3-Literature (imaginative) is a work of art that has a unique form. It is not part of a set of rules, but is a work of art in itself. A literary text is not read as a means to an end, but as an end in itself, being a ritual of play, entertainment, or pastime for the audience and an opportunity to look at life and human affairs in general, like a poem (Togebly, 2014, p.2).

2.3 Authenticity

The materials produced for native English speakers and utilized in schools in a manner comparable to how they were intended would be considered "authentic", written or spoken word may be used as authentic content (Widdowson, 1990, p.67). Authentic materials are effective tools to bridge the gap between the classroom and the actual world (Vorland et al, 2002). It feels that students learn best when they are exposed to real-world applications of the language they are learning. As a result, Richards (2001) says that the language used in the classroom should reflect the language used in the actual world.

Authentic materials, according to Jacobson et al (2003, p.1), are printed materials that are utilized in classrooms just as they would be used in real life.

2.4 Criteria of Authenticity

Using realistic materials prepares students for real-world scenarios. In order to determine whether a text is authentic, McGrath has presented a criterion for selecting authentic materials.

According to McGrath (2002), while selecting relevant authentic texts, there are eight characteristics to examine. These include (1) relevance to course book and student needs, (2) topic interest, (3) cultural appropriateness, (4) logistical issues, (5) cognitive demands, (6) linguistic demands, (7) quality, and (8) exploitation. "[S]uitability of the content, exploitability, and readability" are the three primary criteria for selecting and gaining access to books for classroom usage. Suitability is considered as the most crucial characteristic, as it implies that reading materials must pique the learners' attention, suit their needs, and inspire them.

2.5 Literary Texts

Literary texts are authentic works that may be utilized in the classroom at any level. Fairy tales and stories, for example, may be utilized as a useful teaching material for children in a foreign language lesson. Similarly, teachers may employ famous prose and poetry from around the globe as teaching materials in the classroom, making the lesson more entertaining and pleasant for students (Khan, 2018, p.167). Literary texts demonstrate the importance of author type selection in attaining communication objectives;

- They serve as a great resource for adapting the four core language skills; -Literary texts are authentic and inspiring.
- They increase cultural understanding by enhancing students' interpretive abilities and are featured in most curriculum.
- Students appreciate the lesson because it encourages them to express themselves verbally (Khan, 2018, p.167).

2.6 Previous Studies

1. Alzyadi & Alshumaimeri (2015)

This study aimed to identify the extent of using authentic materials in the new series of secondary English textbooks (*Flying High for Saudi Arabia*) used currently in Saudi schools. So a descriptive analytical method tool depending on content analysis is used. The tool is given to 112 EFL female instructors in Riyadh public secondary schools. The results reveal that the chosen textbook places a considerable amount of emphasis on material authenticity. The resources available encourage genuine dialogue among EFL students, prepare them for future target language usage, and offer realistic language in real-world situations.

2. Purwandani, Raja & Suparman, (2017)

The aim of this study is to see whether the present authentic reading materials in students' textbooks were compatible with the authenticity criteria. The researcher has used content analysis methodology to achieve this aim. The sample is three authentic reading passages extracted from Erlangga Publisher's Pathway to English 2. The tool included McGrath's (2002) criteria for authenticity with Arias's (2007) criteria for effective reading

materials. The chosen textbook's authentic reading materials met the criterion for authenticity. This means the books may be used as teaching materials.

3. Al Khazaleh (2020)

The aim of this research is to examine the reading passages from the student's book in Action Pack 7 to see how authentic they are using content analysis method. The reading texts in Action Pack 7 are analyzed by using an analytical tool that is general guidelines and general and specific outcomes of the English language teaching objectives (2007). The results of the analysis indicated that the reading texts in "Action Pack 7" have had a high degree of authenticity, with 18 (86%) of the 21 reading texts being authentic.

4. Artha, Marhaeni and Dewi, (2020)

The aim of this study is to establish the degree of authenticity of the content utilized by English teachers, as well as the criteria that they use to choose authentic material. This study employs an explanatory mix-method approach using content analysis. The study's data is gathered via document analysis and interviews. The findings of this research show that the resources utilized by English teachers at Singaraja's senior high schools are of good quality.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Method

According to the descriptive study, the content analysis method is used to analyze the content of the literary texts in the preparatory stages of the textbook 'English for Iraq' in light of authenticity criteria.

The qualitative content analysis tries to set up carefully defined categories that the researcher finds and changes to make sure they are accurate and useful. In qualitative content analysis, the study of texts involves both the inductive understanding of categories and the deductive application of those categories to specific data (Drisko & Maschi, 2016, p.6).

3.2 Aims

This study aims to:

1- identify the criteria on which the authenticity of the literary text in the Iraqi preparatory textbook "English for Iraq" is considered and studied.

2-analyze the content of literary texts' in order to find out whether the selected criteria of authenticity and the literary text are compatible or not.

3.3 Limits of the Study

The limits of the current study are :

1-Analysing the content of literary texts' authenticity in "English for Iraq" students' book for the preparatory public schools in Iraq,

2- the academic year of 2021-2022, and

3- the teachers of preparatory schools in the center of Babylon province.

3.4 Procedures

The researcher has analyzed the data by determining the sample and the population of the study. In this study, the researcher analyses the literary texts in the whole textbook to be

the sample of the study and the whole textbook to be the population of the study. The researcher has also used another population to analyze the texts and it is the preparatory school teachers from the center of Babylon. The population is 314 teacher and the sample taken is 124 which represent 40% of the population.

Table (1) The population & sample

No.	Book	Grade	Total pages	Number of units	Literary texts
1	"English of Iraq" Student's Book	4 th Preparatory	185	8	4 poems
2	"English of Iraq" Student's Book	5 th Preparatory	192	8	2 short stories
3	"English of Iraq" Student's Book	6 th Preparatory	128	8	2 Dramas

Research Tools

The researcher has used two analytical tools.

First, mixed criteria for determining authenticity within the literary texts from McGrath (2002) and Arias(2007) to achieve the aim of this study. The criteria contain an evaluation items conducted within three levels. These levels are, the content level, the students level and the teachers level. Framing the analytical tool is based on relevant previous studies and the remarks of the jury members.

Second, an interview is conducted to a sample of teachers to enrich the research process.

Table (2) Levels of the analytical tool

No.	Criteria Components
1	Content Level
1.1	Suitability of the Content
1.2	Linguistic Aspects
1.3	Social-Cultural Aspects
1.4	Notional-Functional Aspects
1.5	Literary Textbook Activities
2	Students' Level
3	Teachers' Level

3.6 Validity of the Research Tool

According to Singh (2007, p.77), validity is concerned with determining if a concept test accurately measures the concept in question, or the degree to which the word measures what it claims to measure. Validity refers to a measuring tool's capacity to measure what it was designed to measure (Henning, 1987, p.89).

In this study, the criteria are examined by jury members who are experts in methods of teaching English to make sure that the analytical tool is ready for measuring what it is intended to measure. The experts offered some modifications for the third level of the criteria, the change has been taken into consideration to determine the final form of the criteria. All the items prove to be valid and all have been included in the criteria to evaluate the texts later on.

3.7 Analysis

3.7.1 Steps of the Analysis

1- First, the criteria has been distributed manually to the sample of teachers (124) in the center of Babylon.

2- Then, it has been collected by the researcher and transformed the results into data with the excel program.

3- Finally, the results have been converted to statistical data with the SPSS.

3.7.2 Reliability of Analysis

Singh (2007, p.77) claims that in order to determine if a variable is consistent over time, researchers must first ask whether the results for a sample of respondents have changed. The first of these three characteristics is called consistency. This is followed by an issue of internal reliability, which is concerned with ensuring that the scale or index measures are correct. Inter-observer consistency is further enhanced when more than one observer is involved in actions such as documenting observation or converting data into categories.

Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to calculate the reliability in the present research. With a total sample size of 124 (40 percent) participants, the reliability value for all criterion items is (**0.906**). This number shows how trustworthy the criteria's items are.

4. Results and discussion

The presentation of results includes the researcher's responses to the following questions:

What are the authenticity criteria that should be available in the literary text in "English for Iraq" textbook for the preparatory stage?

To answer this question the researcher has adopted a mixed criteria of McGrath (2002) and Arias (2007) to be met in the literary texts of the textbook (English for Iraq) for preparatory stage by reviewing previous resources, these studies are mentioned above in section (2.6) above.

2- To what extent are the current literary texts in "English for Iraq" textbooks of preparatory

stage compatible with the criteria of authenticity and its components?

To answer this question, the researcher examined the content of the textbook's literary texts for the preparatory stage in light of the authenticity criteria, and the results of the interview.

The results of the first level of the criteria

Table (3) T-test Application on the first level (Content level) in Suitability of the Content

Criteria levels	N	Mean	Std. deviation	T		Df	M	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Value	Tab			
Suitability of the Content.	124	15.69	2.154	8.713	1.96	123	14	0.05

Table (4) T-test Application on the first level (Content level) in Linguistic Aspects

Criteria levels	N	Mean	Std. deviation	T		Df	M	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Value	Tab			
Linguistic Aspects	124	6.72	7.072	1.96	1.96	123	6	0.05

Table (5) T-test Application on the first level (Content level) in Social-cultural Aspects

Criteria levels	N	Mean	Std. deviation	T		Df	M	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Value	Tab			
Social-cultural Aspects	124	10.95	2.114	5.013	1.96	123	10	

Table (6) T-test Application on the first level (Content level) in The Notional-Functional Aspects

Criteria levels	N	Mean	Std. deviation	T		Df	M	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Value	Tab			
The Notional-Functional Aspects	124	9.10	1.773	6.887	1.96	123	8	

Table (7) T-test Application on the first level (Content level) in Literary Textbook Activities

Criteria levels	N	Mean	Std. deviation	T		Df	M	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Value	Tab			
Literary Textbook Activities	124	8.77	1.804	4.730	1.96	123	8	

The researcher has found that the first level of the criteria which is the content level and its components shows a good level of authentic aspects. First the suitability of the content t-test scored (8.713) which is greater than the tabulated number that is (1.96), linguistic aspect come second with t-test scored (7.072) and the notional functional aspects score (6.887) . While the social-cultural aspect and the literary activities score lower but still higher than the tabulated value (1.96) and that means the five components of the criteria has been met within the literary texts.

Table (8) T-test application on the second level.

The results of the second level which is the Students' level.

Criteria levels	N	Mean	Std. deviation	T		df	M	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Value	Tab			
Students' level	124	15.37	2.434	6.271	1.96	123	14	0.05

The second level of the criteria, the students' level, is also highly significant and the t-test value is (6.271). The points presented in the literary texts match the students' proficiency level and needs and that is one aspect of the authentic texts.

Table (9) T-test application on the third level.

The results of the third level which is the Teachers level.

Criteria levels	N	Mean	Std. deviation	T		Df	M	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Value	Tab			
Teachers' level	124	9.36	1.981	18.904	1.96	123	8	0.05

The third level which is the last level of the criteria (teachers' level) has a very high degree of significance. The t-test value is (18.904) and this score is very high. The third level is highly significant which the teachers level and the criteria prove to match most of the points shown in this level.

Findings of the Interview

The researcher has recorded and discussed the respondents' replies. The answers for the first question are shown in the table below.

Table (10) the percentages of the first question

No. of Participants	Question No.	Results	Total
17	1	yes	17
		no	0
			100%

From the table above, the researcher has noticed that 100% of the participants have answered positively because the teachers are obliged to teach literature as it exists in the textbook according to the recommendations of the Ministry of Education in Iraq. The rest of the interview questions are open-ended questions and they are as follows :

The second question was " **What do you know about the term authenticity?**" All of the answers are negative and none of the participants know about the term authenticity, so the researcher explain the term briefly as it is mentioned in literature review in section (2.3).

"We know nothing about authenticity" T 1,2,3,4

"It was explained by you, but before I had no idea about it" T 6

"We are unfamiliar with the term authenticity" T8,T9,T10

The third question was "**Do the reading literary texts offer topics related to the learner's culture?**". The answers for this question vary as follows: 58.8% answer is that the literary reading texts offer related cultural topics .

" As for the 4th stage the poems hold general cultural themes and individual themes . T 1, 2 and 3

"**The Lady of Shalott by Alfred Lord Tenison** represents art and creativity, while **When You Are Old** represents love and refusal. These two poems belongs to foreign and represent individual culture themes. The other two poems belong for two Iraqi great poets, the first one is **For the Sake of Our Homeland** by Ma'ruf al Rusafi which speaks the Iraqi culture and hopes for a better future for this country away from war and sectarian. The second Iraqi poem is **Love Song for Words** by **Nazik Al-Mala'ika** .This poem talks love for words and the effect of these words in the human lives represented in the roses language to extract the beauty of the image words make" Tr 7

The fourth question is " **Is the content of the literary text relevant to the learners needs?**" 70.5% answer with "Yes" supporting their answers with the density of the language presented in the literary texts .

The other 29.5 state that not all the literary texts match the learners need especially the poetry in because the language presented in the texts is difficult and students barely understand the idea after the use of the glossary and the explanation of their teachers.

T 1 "poetry is irrelevant to the learners needs due to its difficult language"

T 2" the individual differences make it hard for all the students to get the idea as well the increased number of students in the classrooms"

The fifth question is "**Does the language of the text matches the students' proficiency level?**" 76.3% answered with not all the language presented in the literary texts across the stages match the students proficiency level.

T 7 " the language used in some of the poems is difficult even with the use of the glossary, and one of the plays that is of Shakespeare(The Tempts), most students find difficult to read but the use of the simplified version under the original text with the help of the teacher they can get the idea"

11.7% answered with yes the texts presented in the literary texts match the students' proficiency level. 15% answered according to the individual differences among the students, some of the students find it easy to understand the texts while others need help and further explanations.

The sixth question is "**What kind of assignments/ activities do you give the class that is related to literature and serve real life purpose?**"

The participants answered with the following percentages :

76.4% of the participants suggest that the lesson time is not enough for activities, as it is barely sufficient to cover the lesson .

T 4 : " As a teacher for the 6th grade the I have no time for activities and assignments, because the students have backloria exams"

T 8 : " The time is only sufficient for explaining the text with no extra activities due to the huge number of the students among one class and their individual differences at the proficiency level"

28.8% of the interviewees answer with yes they do give variant activities that are related to the literary texts.

"I ask my students opinions of the story that we've just studied and we hold a discussion" Teacher 9

"I used to take them to the theatre to watch and act the play" T 12

The last 5.8% says that it is according to the teacher himself/herself to give activities or not.

"Depends on the teacher to give the activity " T 10

The seventh and the last question is **"How do you evaluate authentic language presented in the literary texts ?"**

70% of the interviewees say that the texts are authentic .

"The plays of the 6th grade has rich and purposeful language that motivates the students to interact and use the language in the real life and it also reflects cultural aspects that are relevant to the students own culture " T 1

The other 30% said that the language presented in the texts is partially authentic for it make the students interact with each other and the teacher after the explanation and the use of the glossary.

"It's difficult to make the students understand the poems for they lose their beauty and ideas by facing a difficult idiom and terms that needs to be translated to the mother tongue or to be simplified within the same language" T 10

5. Conclusion

1- The analysis's findings concern the accessibility of the criteria items with varying relative weights from one item to another at the same level as well as from one level to another.

2- From the analysis and tables above the first level has scored high scores ranking (18.904- 4.730). These scores point out to the availability of authenticity aspects with the literary texts and these texts are compatible with the criteria.

3- The interview also result in the availability of the authentic aspects within the literary texts.

6- Recommendations

1- Teachers should be aware of the importance of authenticity and take into their account the right division of class time.

2- Teachers and students should focus more in using literary texts in classrooms due to its great effect on the student's language.

3- The policy makers in the Ministry of Education in Iraq should always put the learners as their priority. Therefore, designers of curricula should choose variant literary texts that are accessible to all students.

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