

## Students' Attitudes towards Authentic Materials Used in English Literature Classes at Gaza Universities

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**Abstract:** Though the use of authentic materials in instruction has been one of the controversial issues among second language or foreign language (L2/FL) researchers and practitioners, empirical research conducted on this area is still limited in Arab EFL (English as a foreign language) contexts including Palestine. Hence, this study aimed to recognize students' attitudes towards the authentic materials used in English literature classes at Gaza universities. To fulfill the study objectives, the researcher administered a questionnaire to 255 students, and conducted interviews with 12 students selected from the 255 ones. The participants' responses to the questionnaire were analyzed in terms of percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Additionally, the interviews were transcribed, coded, and organized into a number of categories. Results showed that the participants had moderate attitudes towards the authentic materials used in English literature classes and high attitudes towards the contents of such materials. Finally, the study provided its implications.

**Key words:** attitudes, Gaza universities, authentic materials, English literature

## اتجاهات الطلبة بجامعة غزة نحو المواد الأصيلة المستخدمة في حصص الأدب الإنجليزي

**المخلص:** لقد احتدم الجدل بين الباحثين و العاملين بتعليم اللغة الأجنبية أو الثانية حول استخدام المواد الأصيلة في التعليم في الآونة الأخيرة، و مع هذا لا يزال البحث الميداني حول هذه القضية في المناطق العربية المهمة بتعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية مثل فلسطين محدودا؛ لذلك هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على اتجاهات الطلبة بجامعة غزة نحو المواد الأصيلة المستخدمة في حصص الأدب الإنجليزي، و لتحقيق أهداف الدراسة قامت الباحثة بتطبيق استبيان على (255) طالب و طالبة و إجراء مقابلات مع (12) طالب و طالبة تم اختيارهم من (255) طالب و طالبة. و قامت الباحثة بتحليل استجابات أفراد العينة للاستبيان باستخدام النسبة المئوية، و المتوسط الحسابي، و الانحراف المعياري إضافة إلى تفريغ المقابلات و تصنيفها و تنظيمها في هيئة محاور. و أشارت النتائج إلى أن أفراد العينة يمتلكون اتجاهات متوسطة نحو المواد الأصيلة المستخدمة في حصص الأدب الإنجليزي و اتجاهات إيجابية عالية نحو محتوى هذه المواد، و ختاماً قدمت الدراسة توصياتها.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** اتجاهات ، جامعات غزة، المواد الأصيلة، الأدب الإنجليزي.

### 1. Introduction

The use of authentic materials in L2/FL classrooms has recently been discussed. In language teaching, 'cult of authenticity' was originated with the communicative teaching movement of the late 1970s (Day & Bamford, 1998, p 53). According to the *Communicative Teaching Method*, using authentic materials is essential for developing students' communicative competence (Nagaraj, 1996; Eguchi & Eguchi, 2006). In fact, a number of

studies (e.g., Peacock, 1997; Su, 2007; Musallam, 2009; Ghaderpanahi, 2012; Huessien, 2012; Mousavi & Iravani, 2012; Soliman 2013) have been recently carried out to investigate the use of authentic materials in L2/FL classrooms.

Regarding the Palestinian EFL context, very little research has been conducted on the use of authentic materials in English language instruction. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, Yousif (1998) is the only Palestinian study that approached this research area. It examined the effect of authentic and simplified materials on Palestinian EFL twelfth graders' reading comprehension. The study indicated that authentic reading materials had no significant effect on the participants' reading comprehension, and it recommended conducting extensive research on the use of authentic materials in EFL classrooms. However, none of the studies carried out recently in the Palestinian EFL context probed this research area. Therefore, the present study attempted to investigate Gaza EFL students' attitudes towards the authentic materials used in literature classes at Gaza universities.

According to Palestinian Ministry of Education (2013), Gaza universities are of three types: governmental universities, non-governmental public universities, and private universities. Governmental universities are mainly funded by the Palestinian government. Non-governmental public universities are supported by non-governmental institutions. Private universities are owned by individual educators. The three types of universities have the same entry system which is the successful completion of year 12 of secondary school with a minimum grade of 65% average. Each university consists of a number of faculties capable of giving B.A. (Bachelor of Arts) degree. The three types of universities include Faculties of Education. The programs offered by Faculties of Education in all Gaza universities are to some extent similar. Such programs include *English Language Teaching*, *Arabic Language Teaching*, *Social Studies Teaching*, *Math Teaching*, etc.,. Through her experience as an instructor of English language courses in two Palestinian universities, the researcher had observed that the students majoring English language teaching complained about the authentic materials used in their literature classes. Since little research had been conducted on this area in the Palestinian EFL context, the

present study attempted to investigate Gaza university-level students' attitudes towards the authentic materials used in English literature classes.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### Definitions

Ellis and Johnson (1991) define *authentic materials* as any kind of materials taken from the real world and not specifically designed for the purpose of language teaching. Aebersold and Field (1997) also define *authentic materials* as the materials which are taken directly from L1 sources before they are employed in the classroom. In the same vein, Richards (2001) provides that this term, *authentic materials*, refers to the materials that are not specially prepared for pedagogical purposes, i.e., texts, photographs, video selections, and other teaching resources. Clearly, the three definitions emphasize that *authentic materials* are the materials which are written by native speakers, and they are written for any purpose other than teaching and learning language, i.e., Shakespearian plays and sonnets, Charles Dickens novels, T.S. Eliot poems, etc.

A second important term used in this study is *attitude*. In the view of Pratkanis (1989), *attitude* is defined as "a person's evaluation of an object of thought" (p.72). Furthermore, Eagly and Chaiken (1998) provide that *attitude* is expressed by evaluative response of some degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, and it consists of three components: the cognitive, affective, and the behavioral. Adopting the definition of Eagly and Chaiken (1998), the present study attempted to explore Gaza EFL university students' attitudes towards the authentic materials used in literature classes through examining their opinions, emotions, and behaviors regarding such materials.

A third definition employed in this study is *literature*. According to Reiss (1992), *literature* is one of the socially purposive discursive activities that serve some specifiable roles in a society. Furthermore, Steen (1999) states that *literature* may be argued to be the "superordinate of genres such as the novel, the poem, and the play" (p.114). In the present study, *literature* refers to the literary works Gaza EFL university students study such as poems, novels, stories, and plays.

### Advantages and Disadvantages of Authentic Materials

Authentic materials use in L2/FL instruction seems to be worthwhile in that they expose learners to real-life language rather than artificial language of course textbooks (Tomlison, 2003; Berardo, 2006). Indeed,

authentic materials can help in contextualizing language learning through reinforcing the relation between language classroom and outside world (Gebhard, 2006), and it can provide rich and varied linguistic input for language learners. Therefore, its use in FL/L2 language learning leads to linguistic development and a native-like competence (Mishan, 2005).

Another advantage of authentic materials (i.e., literary materials) use in FL/L2 instruction is that such materials expose students to different cultural backgrounds so that the students may gain deep understanding of the topic (Kelly, Kelly, Offner, & Vorland, 2002). Understanding the cultural background of a target language is fundamental since culture and language are inseparable (Piasecka, 2011).

Additionally, using authentic materials can increase motivation, and create positive attitudes towards learning, because they are interesting and related to language learners' needs and interests (Kelly et al, 2002).

However, authentic materials (i.e., authentic literary materials) have been subjected to many criticisms. Gebhard (2006) views that one disadvantage of using authentic materials is that it takes time and effort to locate suitable sources of authentic materials and to develop activities and tasks related to such materials. According to Gebhard, authentic materials are not accepted by some students, because they consider them non-academic and sources of fun and amusement. Moreover, Richards (2001) notes that such materials may be irrelevant to students' achievement level, needs, and interests, since they contain difficult language, complex structural patterns, and unneeded vocabulary words

It may be argued that authentic materials (i.e., authentic literary materials) help in developing FL/L2 students' competence, since it can provide rich and varied linguistic input for such students. However, using authentic materials may be associated with problems such as its irrelevance to students' achievement level, needs, and interests. Below are the points FL/L2 teachers need to put into consideration when selecting authentic materials.

### **Considerations When Selecting Authentic Materials**

To avoid the potential problems with authentic materials, teachers need to consider many points when selecting this type of materials. Such points include the objectives of instructional program, the relevance of the contents to students' achievement level, the relevance of the topics to

students' needs and interests, and the conditions of students to engage with a text (Berardo, 2006; McKay, 2012).

It is essential for the authentic materials L2/FL teachers use to engage students in authentic communication, since texts providing incentives to communication spur intrinsic motivation and stimulate interest (Michan, 2005). Furthermore, authentic materials should be the materials that students need when travelling, studying abroad, or utilizing language outside the classroom (Berardo, 2006).

Learning styles associated with authentic materials can encourage students to use language intelligently. Learning style can affect L2 learning process, and it is relevant to students' reactions to authentic materials (Mishan, 2005). For facilitating the teaching of authentic materials, teachers need to give students text related tasks including pre-reading activities, i.e., activating existing schemata, while-reading activities, i.e., improving interaction between reader and writer, and post-reading activities, i.e., questions following a text (Berardo, 2006). Moreover, Post-reading questions should be challenging so that the students can get involved in deductive reasoning (Kelly et al, 2002). Additionally, post-reading activities require students to use information from the text to fulfill communicative purposes (Tomlinson, 2011).

### **3. Previous Studies**

Though the use of authentic materials in instruction has been one of the controversial issues among L2/FL researchers and practitioners, empirical research conducted on this area is still limited. Some studies addressed the effect of authentic materials on motivation to learn L2/FL. Examples of such studies include a study of Peacock (1997) that investigated the impact of authentic materials on EFL Korean university students' motivation. The study showed that motivation increased significantly when authentic materials were used. Moreover, Thanajaro (2000) reported that aural authentic materials had a positive effect on English as a second language (ESL) high intermediate students' attitudes towards learning a language. Thabit (2006) also indicated that authentic materials enhanced United Arab Emirates (UAE) EFL high school students' attitudes towards learning English language. Likewise, Rodngam (2011) concluded that the use of authentic materials increased EFL high school students' motivation to learn vocabulary of listening materials. Furthermore, Ghaderpanahi (2012) and

Sabet and Mahsefat (2012) showed that authentic materials had positive effects on Iranian university students' motivation to learn English language.

Other previous studies examined the impact of authentic materials on students' performance in L2/FL skills. For instance, Yousif (1998) examined the effect of authentic and simplified materials on Palestinian EFL twelfth graders' reading comprehension. The study indicated that authentic reading materials had no significant effect on the participants' reading comprehension. Unlike Yousif (1998), Demircan (2004) revealed that authentic materials enhanced EFL ninth graders' grammatical knowledge, retention, and opinion. Furthermore, Mousavi and Iravani (2012) and Alijani, Maghsoudi, and Madani (2014) examined the influences of authentic materials on the listening comprehension of Iranian EFL upper-intermediate students. The two studies showed that the use of authentic aural materials enhanced the participants' listening comprehension.

As for the studies that utilized the descriptive method for investigating EFL/ESL students' attitudes towards authentic reading materials, Su (2007) examined the attitudes of ESL instructors in Indiana and Kentucky towards authentic materials, and the study showed that the participants had positive attitudes towards such materials. Prapinwong and Puthikanon (2008) also investigated EFL college level students' views on WebQuest as authentic programs. The study revealed that 26% of the selected WebQuets could easily be used for EFL instruction, while the rest needed to be modified. Likewise, Musallam (2009) examined Saudi EFL university students' and instructors' attitudes towards authentic reading materials, and the study reported that the participants had positive attitudes towards the materials. In the same vein, Huessien (2012) examined the obstacles Iraqi teachers encountered when teaching authentic materials, and the study recommended that the authentic materials should be relevant to student's environment and culture. Finally, in a study of Soliman (2013), Libyan EFL university teachers' attitudes towards authentic materials use in reading classes were investigated, and it was shown that the participants had positive attitudes towards authentic materials use in English reading classes.

Furthermore, the three studies of Bataineih (2009), Al-Ghazo and Smadi (2013), and Al-Surmi (2012) focused on investigating authenticity in EFL/ESL materials. While Bataineih (2009) reported that the amount of authentic cultural aspects in the prescribed English language textbooks of

the secondary schools in Jordan was ignored, Al-Ghazo and Smadi (2013) revealed that the reading texts in Jordanian EFL student books had a high degree of authenticity. In the same vein, Al-Surmi (2012) investigated the extent to which some TV shows reflected the linguistic representation of natural conversation. The study revealed that some TV shows (i.e., soap opera and sitcom) could be considered as a source of authentic texts representing natural conversation.

Considering the above studies, it can be noted that Yousif (1998) is the only study conducted in the Palestinian EFL context. While Yousif (1998) examined the effect of authentic and simplified materials on EFL students' reading comprehension in West Bank secondary schools, the present study investigated students' attitudes towards the materials used in English literature classes at Gaza universities. Unlike Yousif (1998), the present study utilized the descriptive method (i.e., a quantitative instrument and a qualitative instrument) to fulfill its objectives.

#### **4. Research Questions**

The present study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What are EFL students' attitudes towards the authentic materials used in English literature classes at Gaza universities?
2. Are there statistically significant differences in Gaza EFL university-level students' attitudes towards the authentic literary materials attributed to their achievement levels?

#### **5. Methodology**

##### **5.1. Research Design**

The present study adopted the descriptive method for investigating Gaza university students' attitudes towards the authentic literary materials used in English classes. According to Koul (2009), the descriptive research helps to explain educational phenomena such as opinions and views, and it can include qualitative research or quantitative research.

##### **5.2. Research Ethics**

Several considerations must be addressed when conducting research. According to Anderson and Arsenault (1998), such considerations imply that the research must not expose participants to risks, and the participants should be informed of the purpose of research, its risks, and its benefits. The participants should also be informed that the participation is voluntary, and they are free to withdraw from the research at any time. Taking such



research ethics into account, the researcher informed the participants of the study objectives and procedures, and got informed consents from them.

### **5.3. Participants**

The participants involved in the present study were 255 (202 females and 53 males) fourth year B.A. English majors selected randomly from three universities in Gaza Strip. Gaza Strip includes seven universities with 670 fourth year B.A. English majors (527 females and 143 males) in the first semester of the academic year 2013-2014. The three universities were selected based on university type i.e., governmental university, independent public university, and private university; the gender attending it, i.e., males, females; and the areas the students were belonging to, i.e., South of Gaza Strip, North of Gaza Strip. The selection of the fourth year was based on the fact that the participants passed most academic courses (i.e., *ELT* (English Language Teaching), *Introduction to Linguistics*, *Poetry*, *Drama*, *Novel*, *Reading*, *Writing*, *Listening & Speaking*), and experienced studying authentic materials. All the students had been studying English as a foreign language for eleven years and their ages ranged from twenty to twenty two years old.

Then, to gather detailed data about the participants' beliefs regarding authentic materials use in English literature classes, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with twelve students selected from the 255 ones. The twelve participants were selected based on university type i.e., governmental university, independent public university, and private university; the gender attending it, i.e., males, females; and students' achievement level in English language i.e., students whose achievement levels ranged from 85%-100%, 70%-84%, and 60-69.

### **5.4. Instruments**

The researcher developed two instruments in this study: a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The researcher checked the content validity and face validity of the instruments. Below is a detailed description for each instrument.

#### **5.4.1. A researcher-made questionnaire**

Considering some relevant studies (e.g., Miekley, 2005; Su, 2007; Musallam, 2009), the researcher prepared a questionnaire consisting of three categories, i.e., 'Contents', 'Vocabulary & Structures', and 'Questions &

Activities' (Appendix A). The questionnaire items required multiple choice answers with a five-point Likert scale: 1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=uncertain, 4=disagree, and 5=strongly disagree. The content and face validity of the questionnaire was achieved, and its internal consistency was determined by the researcher using Cronbach Alpha. According to Johnson and Christensen (2012), Cronbach Alpha is used for assessing reliability of an instrument, and an internal consistency of 0.70 or over is required. The Alpha coefficient for the overall questionnaire (12 items) was at 0.87 which is regarded a high level of reliability. Furthermore, Cronbach Alpha was run for the questionnaire categories: the Alpha coefficients were at 0.83 for 'Contents' (4 items), 0.74 for 'Vocabulary & Structures' (4 items), and 0.86 for 'Questions & Activities' (4 items). Table (1) presents the Alpha coefficients of the questionnaire categories.

**Table 1: Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients of the questionnaire categories.**

Category	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha coefficients
Contents	4	0.83
Vocabulary & Structures	4	0.74
Questions & Activities	4	0.86
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>0.87</b>

#### 5.4.2. A semi-structured Interview

To complement the questionnaire data about the participants' attitudes towards the authentic materials used in English classes, the study conducted semi-structured interviews. Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2006) view that semi-structured interviews can help researcher probe beyond the interview questions, and therefore gather in-depth data about the phenomenon. Reviewing some relevant references (e.g., Miekley, 2005; Su, 2007; Musallam, 2009), the researcher developed the interview questions (Appendix B). Each interview lasted thirty minutes, and was audio-recorded for transcription.

#### 5.5. Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The study administered its instruments at three universities in Gaza in the first semester of the academic year 2013-2014 (October 2013). First, 255 students were asked to complete copies of a researcher-developed

questionnaire measuring their attitudes towards the authentic materials used in English literature classes. It took approximately 10-20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Then, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with twelve students in four groups, each of which consisted of three male and female students with different achievement levels. Each interview lasted for thirty minutes, and it was audio-taped. Furthermore, the twelve participants were allowed to use their mother tongue language (Arabic) while talking so that they could express their thoughts freely.

First, the questionnaire data were processed statistically using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The participants' responses to the questionnaires were analyzed in terms of percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Second, to determine the statistical differences between the participants' attitudes towards the authentic materials used in English literature classes, the researcher used analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Bonferroni Test. According to Kothari (2004), analysis of variance is used to examine the significance of the differences between more than two sets of scores. Additionally, Bretz, Hothorn, and Westfall (2011) state that Bonferroni test is the best known multiplicity adjustment, and it compares the unadjusted P-values. It is worth mentioning that the participants were divided into three groups: students whose achievement levels ranged from 85%-100%, 70%-84%, and 60-69.

To analyze the qualitative data, the researcher employed the qualitative data analysis steps given by Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtler (2006) in analyzing the interviews. The interviews were transcribed, coded, and organized into three categories including: 'Contents', 'Vocabulary & Structures', and 'Questions & Activities'. To establish the interviews data credibility, another researcher reviewed and coded the data, and the two researchers agreed on 85% of the coded data.

## **6. Results**

### **6.1. Results of the First Question**

In order for the first question to be answered, a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were utilized in the present study. After analyzing the participants' responses to the questionnaire copies, the researcher used the rubric utilized in Masri (2003) so as to determine the participants' attitudes towards the authentic materials used in English

literature classes at Gaza universities. Following is the rubric put by Masri (2003):

- Very high: 80% and above
- High: 70%-79.9%
- Moderate: 60%-69.9%
- Low: 50%-59.9%
- Very low: below 50%

Table 2 presents means, standard deviations, and percentages of the participants' responses to the questionnaire.

**Table 2: Means, standard deviations, and percentages of the participants' responses to the questionnaire.**

Category	Mean	Standard deviation	Percentage
Contents	3.91	0.80	78.3
Vocabulary & Structures	3.15	0.76	63.0
Questions & Activities	2.81	0.91	56.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.29</b>	<b>0.66</b>	<b>65.8</b>

As Table 2 shows, the overall percent frequency of the participants' responses to the questionnaire items was, 65.8 %. This score shows that the participants had moderate attitudes towards the authentic materials used in English literature classes at Gaza universities. The highest score was related to 'Content', 78.3% (high), followed by 'Vocabulary & Structures, 63.0% (moderate); and 'Questions & Activities', 56.2% (low). Below is a detailed description for the questionnaire and interview data.

**Contents**

Table 3 presents means, standard deviations and percentages of the 'Contents' items in the questionnaire.

**Table 3: Means, standard deviations, and percentages of the 'Contents' items in the questionnaire.**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Contents</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1.	The contents of the authentic materials my university teachers use in English literature classes are easy to understand.	3.91	1.05	78.3
2.	The authentic materials my university teachers use in English literature classes contain language learning with cultural insights.	3.91	0.92	78.3
3.	I'm interested in the contents of the authentic materials my university teachers use in English literature classes.	3.92	0.98	78.4
4.	The authentic materials my university teachers use in English literature classes increase my motivation for learning English.	3.91	0.99	78.1
<b>Total</b>		<b>3.91</b>	<b>0.80</b>	<b>78.3</b>

Table 3 shows that the percentage scores of all items fell into the high level. Based on these percentage scores, it may be argued that the participants had positive attitudes towards the contents of the authentic literary materials used in their English classes. Furthermore, the interviews analysis revealed that most participants (nine students) expressed positive attitudes towards the contents of such authentic materials. The next two excerpts may distinctly show the reasons for the students' positive views on the contents of such materials:

Participant 4 (a female student with high achievement level): *I really enjoy studying the authentic literary materials used in our English classes. It is very interesting to have a look at other peoples' cultures. I think that authentic literary materials are the windows through which I can see different ways of thinking. Furthermore, authentic materials are very useful to us in that it can improve my life behaviors. For example, recognizing the heroine's errors, Elizabeth, in 'Pride and Prejudice', I decided not to give*

*blind judgments on people. Reading 'Macbeth' also helped me control my ambition.*

Participant 7 (a male student with middle achievement level): *Though English authentic literary materials are difficult, I like them very much . Maybe, because such materials give me different experiences, and therefore help me be open-minded. I think that studying authentic materials in the university stage is very suitable. I studied much about my culture in early stages of learning, and it is time to read about other cultures.*

In contrast to the above opinions, a few participants (three students) complained that they often found a difficulty in getting the text message due to the difference between the native language culture and the target language culture. Such a few students further claimed that reading about other foreign cultures was useless.

Participant 12 (a male student with low achievement level): *I found a great difficulty in comprehending English authentic materials. Understanding some authentic literary works requires understanding different cultural backgrounds. For example, understanding 'Waste Land' entirely depends on understanding the different English cultural backgrounds included in such poem. I think that English people themselves can hardly understand such poems, so what about us? Additionally, Such materials talk about English culture that is entirely different from our culture. Why then should we learn it?*

Participant 9 (a female student with high achievement level): *I find difficulty in getting involved in not only English poetry but also Arabic poetry. In fact, I hate all types of poetry. In the future, I will not teach literature to EFL learners. Why then must I read and study such complicated poems and plays?*

### **Vocabulary and Structures**

Table 4 reflects EFL Gaza university students' views on the vocabulary and structures included in the authentic literary materials used in their English classes.

**Table 4: Means, standard deviations, and percentages of the 'vocabulary & Structures' items in the questionnaire.**

No.	Vocabulary & Structures	Mean	Standard deviation	Percentage
1.	The authentic materials my university teachers use in English literature classes contain useful vocabulary and structures.	3.80	0.98	76.1
2.	I do not find problems when I learn the new vocabulary and structures included in the authentic materials used in my English literature classes.	2.32	1.07	46.3
3.	I enjoy learning the new vocabulary and structures included in the authentic materials my university teachers use in English literature classes.	3.30	0.93	65.9
4.	The authentic materials my university teachers use in English literature classes provide a chance to use real life English	3.17	1.07	63.5
<b>Total</b>		<b>3.15</b>	<b>0.76</b>	<b>63.0</b>

As shown in the Table 4, the percentage scores which fell into the moderate level are of item 3 ('I enjoy learning the new vocabulary and structures included in the authentic materials my university teachers use in English literature classes') and item 4 ('The authentic materials my university teachers use in English literature classes provide a chance to use real life English'); the percentage scores which got the high level is of item 1 ('The authentic materials my university teachers use in English literature classes contain useful vocabulary and structures'); and the percentage scores which fell into the very low level is of item 2 ('I do not find problems when I learn the new vocabulary and structures included in the authentic materials used in my English literature classes'). These percentage scores may indicate that though the participants had high perceptions of the vocabulary and structures included in the English authentic literary materials used, they had a difficulty in acquiring it.

Furthermore, the interviews analysis showed that all participants had problems with the vocabulary and structures included in the authentic literary materials used in their English literature classes. According to them, novels and stories are the easiest to understand, followed by drama, and finally poetry.

Participant 3 (a female student with middle achievement level): *The vocabulary included in all types of authentic literary materials i.e., poetry, novels, plays, stories are so difficult. I usually spend a whole day on interpreting unfamiliar words using my dictionary. Then, in the next day, I focus on comprehending the subject matter. In fact, I spend too much time on interpreting unfamiliar vocabulary words.*

Participant 2 (a female student with low achievement level): *I do not like authentic materials, specifically old British authentic materials. While reading authentic materials I often meet a lot of sophisticated words. Each line in the text of a novel or a poem contains four or five unfamiliar words. I do not have time for translating all such vocabulary words! Additionally, most British old materials contain old words that are not usually used in every day situations.*

As can be shown from the last interview excerpt, most students disliked reading old British materials due to its complicated structural patterns and sophisticated words. According to them, reading American literature is very interesting due to its simple language. However, a few students (three students) reported that they liked reading old British materials.

Participant 4 (a female student with high achievement level): *Though British old materials contain a lot of unfamiliar passive vocabulary, I enjoy reading it so much. I feel pleased with consulting many references and dictionaries for understanding the messages conveyed in such materials. When reading British materials, I feel that I live with the characters of the novels and stories, i.e., heroes, heroines etc. I enjoy studying such materials.*

### **Questions and Activities**

Table 5 reflects EFL Gaza university students' views on the questions and activities associated with the authentic literary materials used in their English classes.

**Table 5: Means, standard deviations, and percentages of the 'Questions & Activities' items in the questionnaire.**



No.	Questions & Activities	Mean	Standard deviation	Percentage
	The activities and questions associated with the authentic materials my university teachers use in English literature classes are relevant to my achievement level.	3.04	1.02	60.9
	The authentic materials activities can help us conduct semi-real life communicative tasks.	2.75	1.10	55.1
	I enjoy the activities associated with the authentic materials used in English literature classes.	2.79	1.20	55.8
	I can answer my teachers' questions on the authentic materials used in English literature classes independently.	2.64	1.05	52.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2.81</b>	<b>0.91</b>	<b>56.2</b>

Table 5 presents that while item 1 ('The activities and questions associated with the authentic materials my university teachers use in English literature classes are relevant to my achievement level') fell into the moderate level, the rest of the items got the low level. These percentages clearly indicate that the participants encountered some problems with the activities of the authentic literary materials used in their English classes. The interviews also showed that while some students (five students) reported that they enjoyed English literature activities, other students (seven students) complained that they were not used to conducting any activities in English literature classes. The following three excerpts may show both two opinions:

Participant 4 (a female student with high achievement level): *I enjoy English literature activities so much. Our instructor gives us only the titles of literary works, and ask us to search for the materials, understand its messages, and analyze them. As I told you, I feel pleased with consulting many references and dictionaries for understanding the messages conveyed in such materials.*

Participant 8 (a female student with high achievement level): *I and my colleagues do not often practice any activities in English classes. The teacher usually asks individual students to read aloud, then he gives us an explanation or analysis for the lines read. We have to read such analyses*

*and keep them by heart. In fact, we are not given the opportunity to conduct presentations or discussions in English classes. Indeed, we are used to being recipients, just recipients!*

Participant 6 (a male student with middle achievement level): *Most of our instructors do not conduct any discussions in the classroom. We must attentively listen to them, take notes, and memorize their analyses. I can still remember when one of our instructors gave us questions on a poem and he received no answers. May be because I and my colleagues were not used to conducting any discussions in English literature classes. Examples for the questions our instructors usually give include 'What is the poem talking about?', 'Summarize the chapter or the scene, and 'Give brief data about the author'.*

Additionally, the study revealed that some participants had problems with the time allocated for learning authentic literary works. In fact, the number of the class periods devoted to teaching authentic literary works (i.e., English poems) was perceived by the students to be inadequate.

Participant 6 (a male student with middle achievement level): *Indeed, I can not find adequate time to enjoy English poems. My instructor usually devotes only one class for teaching one or two poems. I think that we need at least two class periods (three hours) for discussing each poem. I feel that all what I should do is memorizing my instructor's comments. How can I enjoy reading poems in such way?*

## **6.2. Results of the Second Question**

The participants were divided into three groups: students whose achievement levels ranged from 85%-100%, 70%-84%, and 60%-69%. It is noteworthy that the students' achievement levels were determined by the their grade point averages (GPA) in their universities. Tables 6 presents analysis of variance (ANOVA) values.

**Table 6: Analysis of variance (ANOVA) values.**

	Source of variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Significance level
Authentic literary Materials	Between groups	38.336	2	19.168	65.197	*0.000
	Within groups	78.204	266	0.294		
	Total	116.540	268			

Table 6 shows that there are statistically significant differences in the participants' attitudes towards the authentic literary materials attributed to their achievement levels, ( $F=65.197$ ,  $P\text{-value}<0.05$ ). Furthermore, Table 7 presents Bonferroni analysis values.

**Table 7: Bonferroni analysis values.**

	Achievement level	Mean	Less than 60-69	70-84	85 and above
The Participants' Attitudes	60%-69%	2.40	1	0.00*	0.00*
	70%-84%	3.34		1	0.00*
	85%-100%	3.98			1

As shown in Table 7, there are statistically significant differences between the participants' attitudes towards the authentic literary materials attributed to their achievement levels in favor of the students whose GPA scores ranged from 85%-100% followed by the students with 70%-84% scores, and finally the students with 60%-69% scores.

## 7. Discussion

The current study indicated that Gaza EFL university students had moderate attitudes towards the authentic materials used in literature classes and high attitudes towards the contents of such materials. Most participants in this study had no problems with the contents of the authentic materials they utilized in English literature classes. According to them, English authentic literary materials are the windows through which they could see different ways of thinking. The result got by the present study may be

congruent with those of Su (2007), Musallam (2009), and Soliman (2013) which reported that EFL/ESL students had positive attitudes towards authentic materials. Regarding this point, Piasecka (2011) views that understanding the cultural background of a target language is fundamental, since culture and language are inseparable.

The study results also revealed that there were statistically significant differences between the participants' attitudes towards the authentic literary materials attributed to their achievement levels in favor of high achievers of English. It may be argued that because the authentic literary materials the participants used in this study were old, and included sophisticated language items, low achievers of English had negative attitudes towards them. As shown in the interviews, most students disliked reading old British materials due to its complicated structural patterns and sophisticated words. From most students' perspectives, such materials can not serve for communicative purposes. In this respect, Shomoossi and Ketabi (2007) view that authentic materials should be communicative. Michan (2005) also mentions that texts providing incentives to communication spur intrinsic motivation and stimulate interest. Additionally, Kelly et al (2002) and Tamo (2009) provide that authentic materials should be relevant to students' knowledge level. Based on that, Gaza EFL university teachers are advised to use authentic materials that are modern and relevant to students' achievement level so that the students with all levels could use the target language communicatively.

Another reason for the students' problems with English authentic literary materials may lie in the learning style associated with such materials. According to Mishan, (2005), learning style can affect L2 learning process, and it is relevant to students' reactions to authentic materials. The present study indicated that some students were not found to conduct any real activities. They reported that they were given the opportunity neither to conduct presentations and discussions nor to answer any challenging questions in English literature classes. In this respect, Berardo (2006) provides that for facilitating the teaching of authentic materials, teachers may give students text related tasks including pre-reading activities, i.e., activating existing schemata, while-reading activities, i.e., improving interaction between reader and writer, and post-reading activities, i.e., questions following a text. Kelly et al (2002) also view that such post-reading questions should be challenging so that the students can get

involved in deductive reasoning. Additionally, Saraceni (2003) notes that the activities used with authentic materials should be authentic in that the tasks should be based on realistic situations exposing students to realistic input, and should not aim at drawing students' attention to certain linguistic features. Furthermore, in order for the tasks to be authentic, interaction should happen in the classroom. According to Tomlison (2011), interaction can happen through two types of activities: opinion gap activities requiring students to communicate with each other or/and the teacher to close the gap and post-reading activities requiring students to use information from materials to fulfill communicative purposes, i.e., writing a review, writing a story, and improvising drama. Based on above opinions, Gaza EFL university teachers are recommended to conduct authentic activities (i.e., challenging questions, group work, and pair work) that can urge students to use language communicatively and enjoy what they read.

The study also revealed that some participants had problems with the time allocated for learning English authentic literary works. The study showed that the number of the class periods devoted to teaching such materials was perceived by students to be inadequate. This result implies a dire need for decreasing the number of literary works given in the semester so that students can find time to enjoy such works.

### **8. Implications**

Based on the discussion above, the study recommends that EFL literature instructors at Gaza universities should use authentic materials in English classes, and they should consider the following when selecting such materials:

- 8.1. Authentic materials should be modern and serve for communicative purposes.
- 8.2. Authentic materials should be relevant to students' knowledge level, needs, and interests.
- 8.3. Decreasing the number of authentic literary works given in university semesters so that students can find time to enjoy such works.
- 8.4. Using suitable learning styles that can help students get involved in literature classes, i.e. conducting discussions, giving challenging questions, activating existing schemata, and improving interaction between students and texts.

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**Appendixes**

**Appendix (A): The questionnaire**

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<b>a. Contents</b>					
1. The contents of the authentic materials my university teachers use in English literature classes are easy to understand					
2. The authentic materials my university teachers use in English literature classes contain language learning with cultural insights.					
3. I'm interested in the contents of the authentic materials my university teachers use in English literature classes.					
4. The authentic materials my university teachers use in English literature classes increase my motivation for learning English.					
<b>b. Vocabulary and Structures</b>					
5. The authentic materials my university teachers use in English literature classes contain useful vocabulary and structures					
6. I do not find problems when I learn the new vocabulary and structures included in the authentic materials used in my English literature classes					
7. I enjoy learning the new vocabulary and structures included in the authentic materials my university teachers use in English literature classes.					
8. The authentic materials my university teachers use in					

English literature classes provide a chance to use real life English					
<b>c. Activities and Exercises</b>					
9. The activities associated with the authentic materials my university teachers use in English literature classes are relevant to my achievement level.					
10. The activities associated with the authentic materials my university teachers use in English literature classes can help us conduct semi-real life communicative tasks..					
11. I enjoy the authentic materials my university teachers use in English literature classes.					
12. I can answer my teachers' questions on the authentic materials used in English literature classes independently					

#### **Appendix (B): The Interview Questions**

1. Do you think that the contents of the authentic materials used in English literature classes are difficult to understand? If yes, what makes them difficult? If no, why do not you find difficulties when studying them?
2. Do you face any difficulties in learning key vocabulary words and structures included in the authentic materials used in English literature classes? If yes, talk about them.
3. Can you answer the questions about the authentic materials used in English literature classes easily? If yes, why can you answer them easily?
5. Do you like/dislike the authentic materials used in English literature classes? Why?
6. Do you prefer old authentic literary materials or new authentic literary materials you have studied? Why?
7. Do you like American authentic materials used in English literature classes authentic or British materials? Why?
8. Which type of authentic materials used in English literature classes do you prefer i.e., poems, plays, stories, and novels, etc. ? Why?