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The Extent of Incorporating Learner-centered Activities in the Intermediate Stage English Textbooks in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

There has been a prominent shift within the field of language learning and teaching over the last few decades with greater emphasis being put on learners and learning rather than on teachers and teaching. Therefore, special focus has been given to the curriculum and the materials being taught. The present study aimed to find out the extentof learner-centered activities in the intermediate stage English textbooks at Saudi Arabian public schools. Based on the criteria of analysis, the work analyzed the activities of the textbooks for learner-centeredness. The findings of the study showed that the number of learner-centered activities was low compared to the non-learner-centered ones. In light of the findings, the work recommended that more incorporation of learner-centered activities should be adopted in the English language textbooks of the intermediate stage in Saudi Arabia.

Keywords: Authentic materials, Content analysis, Cooperative learning, Learner-centered activities, Real life related activities, Third intermediate grade textbooks.

Introduction

During the last few decades, greater emphasis was put on learners and learning rather than on teachers and teachingdue to the shift within the field of language learning and teaching. According to Land and Hannafin (2000), throughout the 1990s, learner-centered learning environments have focused on learners' affordances that affected their way of learning and thinking, rather than transmitting information from teachers to learners. And Brown (2002) adds: when students learn they do that on their own speeds and using their own styles.

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Learner centered teaching and learning

In learner-centered education, the student is placed at the center of education. First, the educational contexts from which a student comes should be understood. Then, the instructor evaluates the student's progress towards learning objectives. This approach places the responsibility for learning on the students by helping them acquirethe basic skills to learn which ultimately provides a basis for learning throughout life. The instructor here assumes responsibility for facilitating the student's education. This approach takes students' individual differences into consideration since it strives to be flexible, varies in methodology, and not always constrained by time or place.

The aim of language teaching and learning is to enable students to communicate with others within contexts. Therefore, it is the students' own responsibility to learn by using their learning styles, cognitive abilities, anduse all the possible features of the language in real life exchanges.

This indicates that learner-centered teaching and learning has become prominent. Learner-centered learning is supported by various pedagogical concepts such as self-direct learning (Candy), active learning (Ramsden), learner-centered instruction or learning (Felder and Brent), vicarious learning (Lee and McKendree), and cooperative learning (Felder and Bren).

Omaggio (2001) mentioned several ways to create a student-centered atmosphere, such as students filling ofinformation sheet that inquires into their backgrounds and interests in second-language learning. Short individual interviews may also be used. She added that the goal of this type of activity is to help students become aware of the types of materials that are readily available for them to read foreign language and to encourage them to use the language to learn about topics of interest.

Panagiotis et al. (2006) suggested that, to create a learner-centered classroom, teachers should incorporate lessons that are age-appropriate and relevant to students' needs and interests. Teachers should facilitate learning rather than just give information. Teachers should place the students at the center of education by giving them multiple opportunities to discover knowledge and practise skills in an environment designed to appeal to them. In addition, the educational environment should be designed to emphasize cognitive processes that prompt learners to construct new meaning from the acquired information. Moreover, learning should be connected to real-life experiences. Teachers should provide directions and feedback to encourage students to become skilled at thinking purposefully as they are provided with connections to real-world experiences.

Crick et al. (2007) stated that, with a person-centered approach to educational reform, the focus is on psychological, emotional, social needs of learners, interventions that maximize healthy functioning and promote motivation, learning, and achievement for all learners. Emotional safety within school structures and processes could be characterized by the question: Do I feel that I am a valuable member of my class and school;and is this communicated to me?This comes as students' emotional safety is strongly dependent upon the qualities of the relationships they have with their teachers and how these qualities are communicated.

According to Nunan, motivation, learning, and achievement are enhanced where learner-centered principles and practices are followed. The benefits of learner-centered practice extend to all participants in the educational systemsuch as students, teachers, administrators, and parents. Societies keep changing. As a result, the role and function of schools should change so that they better meet the needs of the learner as a whole person. This change requires an understanding of basic principles about learning and learners.

Language teaching and learner-centered curricula

It is evident that the new approaches to language teaching and learning set students in the position of language users, not the mere of knowers about the language. Therefore, special focus has been given to the curriculum and the materials being taught.

Nunan (1988) declared that the key difference between learner-centered and traditional curriculum development is that, the learner-centered one is a collaborative effort between teachers and learners, since learners are closely involved in the decision-making process regarding the content of the curriculum and how it is taught. He added that the aim of a learner-centered curriculum is to assist learners use the target language for communicative purposes outside the classroom. One of the justifications for using authentic materials is to generate classroom activities which simulate genuine communication in the classroom in the hope that this will facilitate transfer of learning. He also encouraged learners'self-assessment as it helps them identify preferred materials and ways of learning. They can be involved in evaluating most aspects of the curriculum, including their own progress, the objectives of the course, the materials and learning activities used.

Brown (2001) stated that learner-centered instruction applies to curricula as well as techniques. It includes: (1) techniques that focus on learners' needs, styles, and goals, (2) techniques that give some control to the students, (3) curricula that include the consultation and input of students and that do not presuppose objectives in advance, (4) techniques that allow for students' creativity and innovation, and (5) techniques that enhance a student's sense of competence and self-worth.

Content analysis

Content analysis is a tool or a means to achieve the study objectives. Newman (1997) says that content analysis is a technique for examining information, or content, in written or symbolic materials. In content analysis, the researcher first identifies a body of material to analyze and then creates a system for recording specific aspects of it.

A lot of research has been conducted in the past few decades on content analysis. The reason that content analysis became a major research method in the area of the social sciences is that it is not only limited as a study and research method to quantitative research, but is also suitable for qualitative research. Holsti (1969) offered a broad

definition of content analysis as, "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" (14).

Content analysis is "a multipurpose research method developed specifically for investigating any problem in which the content of communication serves as the basic of inference" (Holsti 2). It is "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" (Marsh Web).

Krippendorff (1980) reinforced the importance of validity and reliability by stating that if research results are to be valid, the data on which they are based, the individuals involved in their analysis, and the processes that yield the results all must be reliable. A reliable procedure should yield the same results from the same set of phenomena regardless of the circumstances of application. To test validity, the results of a procedure must match with what is known to be true or assumed to be already valid.

Objectives of English language teaching in Saudi Arabia

The general objectives of English language teaching in Saudi Arabia are based on the principles of the communicative approach. Therefore, the curriculum is expected to set students in the position of language users. This can be achieved by providing techniques focusing on learners' needs, styles, and goals that give some control to the students.As for learner-centeredness, the curriculum emphasizes the new roles for students by giving them greater opportunities to define their own ways of achieving the objectives. It also emphasizes new roles for teachersto help students achieve the objectives by giving greater consideration to the individual learning needs of every student, varying the order in which they introduce topics, and selecting appropriate learning resources for the learning needs of their students. In addition, it directs teachers to select and use variety of instructional strategies to ensure that all students achieve learning goals that emphasize higher order and critical thinking and go beyond memorizing facts and information. Moreover, the curriculum does not neglect assessment by focusing on new methods of assessing learning through authentic methods, such as research assignments, teamwork, oral, and/or multi-media presentations that demonstrate the knowledge and skills they acquire.

All the objectives are stated on behalf of the students. The following are the core subject objectives:

- to communicate information, ideas, opinions and feelings effectively for a variety of purposes in written, spoken and visual forms to interact and collaborate with others to accomplish goals;
- to read and understand both simplified and authentic texts of a general nature and\ or technical language and identify the main ideas from different contexts;
- toacquire a positive attitude towards English and realize its importance as a means for promoting mutual understanding amongst peoples and countries.

(*Say It In English*, Second Intermediate, Pupil's Book, 2012-2013; *Say It In English*, Third Intermediate, Pupil's Book, 2012- 2013).

According to the learner-centered approach, learning is the responsibility of the learner, and the objectives of the curriculum are also learner-centered.

Statement of the problem

The objectives of English language teaching for the intermediate stage in Saudi Arabia are based on the principles of the communicative approach. According to this approach, the concept of learner-centeredness is emphasized. The objectives stated in *Say It In English*, Second and Third Intermediate Pupil's Book (2012-2013) are learner-oriented. As a result, *Say It In English* textbooks are supposed to include authentic tasks and activities that enable students to use the language communicatively outside the classroom. The activities which are presented in the textbooks should be learner-centered oriented. Therefore, the researcher was interested in analyzing the content of the third intermediategrade textbooks to find out the extent to which it is learner-centered oriented.

Question of the study

The present study aimed to answer the following question:

(1) To what extent dothe intermediate stageEnglish textbooks in Saudi Arabia's public schools include learner-centered activities?

Significance of the study

Content analysis might help teachers reflect on their methods of teaching so that they can help their students use the target language communicatively inside and outside the classrooms. Thus, it is necessary to analyze the content of the intermediate stage textbooks for learner-centered activities and tasks. Moreover, it might be helpful for them in encouraging them to give the students the responsibility for their own learning. Supervisors might also benefit from the findings of this study by shifting the focus from teacher-centeredness to students-centeredness. They may benefit also bytraining the teachers on using current strategies of teaching English as a second or a foreign language where the primary focus is given to the learners.

The Ministry of Education may reconsider the pre-service and the in-service training programmes with regard to the new roles of teachers and students. In addition, the Ministry of Education may benefit from the findings of this study to revise the textbooks so that the content might be changed to be more learner-centered.

Researchers also might make use of the findings of the present study to investigate the effectiveness of learner-centered instruction.

Definition of terms

Cooperative learning (also known as collaborative learning): It is defined as an approach to teaching and learning in which classrooms are organized so that students work together in small cooperative teams. According to J.C. Richards (1988), such

approach to learning is said to increase students' learning since; (a) it is less threatening for many students, (b) it increases the amount of student participation, (c) it reduces the need for competitiveness, and (d) it reduces the teacher's dominance in the classroom.

Learner-centered activities: Theyaretheactivities that focus on learners' needs, styles, and goals. They give some control to the students, include their consultation and input, they allow for students' creativity and innovation, they also enhance students' sense of competence and self-worth. Nunan(1988) declared that the focus will be on assisting learners to do in class what they will need to be able to do outside; the materials should reflect the outside world. In other words, they should have a degree of authenticity. This authenticity should relate to the text source as well as to student activities and tasks. The materials should also foster independent learning by raising the consciousness of the learners and making them more aware of the learning process.

Unit of analysis: The item which is identified as the basis for the analysis. A word, a picture, a paragraph, an activity, a task, etc.... The researcher counts the number of the identified units of analysis all through the content, then talk about the phenomenon under analysis to calculate the percentages of inclusion.

The thirdintermediate grade textbooks: The English textbooks which are being taught to thethird intermediate grade in Saudi public schools in the academic year 2012 / 2013.

Authentic materials: Language teaching materials that have the qualities of natural speech or writing. For example, texts which are taken from newspapers, magazines, etc., and tapes of natural speech taken from ordinary radio or television programs etc… (Richards 27).

Real life related activities: Activities which implement real life characteristics. They prepare the students to the real life, beyond book learning.

Criteria of analysis: A form of validity in which the analysis is compared to particular standards which have been agreed upon. For example, the criteria of the content analysis in this study which are mentioned under research instruments will be referred to in every activity being analyzed in the textbooks.

Limitations of the study

The following points can be considered limitations of the study:

(1) The interpretation of the findings of the present study is based on analytical schemes developed by the researcher. Therefore, their generalizability will be bound to similar analytical schemes.

(2) This study is limited to *Say It In English* textbooks for the third intermediate grade in Saudi public schools.

Review of Related Literature

Studies conducted on learner-centeredness

Warburton and Whitehouse (1998) explored students' perceptions of a learner-centered approach using problem-based learning on an undergraduate practice course at the University of Manchester. A self-completing structured questionnaire was used to evaluate 118 students' perceptions. Results showed that, in learner-centeredness, most student-generated objectives were met. At the same time, problem based learning seminars were enjoyable. As a result, it was recommended that educators take in considerations the differences in learning needs and wants. Moreover, there was a high demand to be clear on students' needs to ensure a learner-centered approach.

Chan (2001) explored the extent to which learner autonomy could work in Hong Kong tertiary classroom. Twenty students from second-year whose major was language were involved in a course on English at the workplace. A special questionnaire was designed in an attempt to promote learner autonomy. The results revealed that students gained awareness of the different roles of the teachers and themselves. They also revealed that students demonstrated positive attitudes towards the autonomous approach. Moreover, students should be given more learning opportunities.

Garrett and Shortall (2002) investigated what language learners said about their experiences of different types of classroom activities, specifically teacher-fronted activities and student-centered pair work activities, in both meaning transmission and grammar tasks. One hundred and three Brazilian EFL students at a language school in the state of Sao Paulo were administered to tasks appropriate to their level. After that, they were asked to fill in a questionnaire that was especially designed for the purpose of that study. The results indicated that students are interested in learner-centered activities as they move up through the language levels.

Alfassi (2004) examined the efficacy of a learner-centered environment in enhancing the academic achievements and motivation of high school students who are at risk of dropping out of school. It is shown that a learner-centered environment yields significantly higher achievement scores and a somewhat higher internal motivational orientation. These results suggest that a structured academic program in a learner-centered environment could provide hope for students at academic risk and other students who are likely to be lost to the academic educational system.

Van Aswegen and Dreyer (2004) investigated the extent to which BSL teacher educators are implementing a learner-centered approach to teaching and learning; identify the factors that impede the transition to a learner-centered approach to teaching and learning; and to provide recommendations to facilitate the implementation of a learner-centered approach to teaching and learning within the faculty of education and sciences. The findings indicated that the current view in higher education is that teacher educators need to focus on student-learning rather than on teaching. To move toward learner-centeredness, it is important to help teacher educators understand what learner- centeredness means and to help them overcome implementation barriers.

Stuart (2005) examined how adult learners at Toronto District School Board experience and perceive their ESL learning process. It was found that the learners call for changed in the organization itself. Therefore, it was highly recommended that the understanding of learner-centeredness should be broadened to include the methodology in the classroom.

Kasanda et.al. (2005) studied the types of everyday contexts and the strategies used in science classes. The study aimed at investigating the extent of learner-centered teaching taking place, and how teachers used this approach. Audio-taped teacher-learner interactions and non-participant field notes were used to collect the data of the study. The sample consisted of twenty nine junior and senior science classes taught by twelve teachers in six schools. The results showed that more everyday contexts were used in junior secondary classes than in senior secondary classes. The findings were related to some interpretations of learner-centered teaching. Therefore, the researchers recommended that teachers fuller implement learner-centered teaching.

Vazaka (2009) investigated the effect of the learner-centered approach on the teaching of reading skills and the importance of pre-reading activities. She suggested strategies for the pre-reading stage in which students' prior knowledge was elicited on which new information was built. The findings indicated that the learners were motivated to read and comprehend the texts. Therefore, it was recommended that teachers should use pre-reading activities using learner-centered approach strategies to facilitate students' understanding of a text and promote several reading skills that are important for the reading process.

Abu Jaleel (2010) designed a learner-centered instructional program to investigate its effect on Jordanian EFL first secondary students' achievement, problem solving, and critical thinking. The findings of the study indicated that the proposed instructional programme had a positive effect on the EFL first secondary students' achievement, problem solving and critical thinking skills. In light of the findings, the researcher recommendedthat learner-centered safe, challenging, authentic, and collaborative environments be established in the teaching/ learning process in a way that promotes active learning; andthere should be real shift from teacher-centeredness to student-centeredness in the classrooms.

Summary

After reviewing some of the studies about learner-centeredness, it was found that it is extremely importantin the teaching learning process. There are individual differences between students, and that everyone learns on his/ her speed and he/ she uses his/ her own learning style(s). Therefore, the best solution to help the students learn is by giving them the chance to be responsible for their own learning. And, if possible, engage them in preparing and designing the learning materials. Security is major demand for learning. In learner-centered approach, the students may feel secure as they do not fear committing mistakes.

Methodology

Population and sample of the study

The population: The population of the present study consisted of all *Say It In English* textbooks which are being taught in Saudi public schools to the first, the second, and the third intermediate grades in the academic year 2012 / 2013. The total number of these textbooks is twelve. A student book and a work book are taught in every semester.

The sample: The sample of the study consisted of the third intermediate grade textbooks. That is, the four textbooks (two pupil's books and two workbooks) of the third intermediate grade in public schools in Saudi Arabia during the academic year 2012 /2013 were content-analyzed for learner-centeredness.

Data collection: The study was conducted using the analytical method in analyzing learner-centeredness at the level of activities presented in the textbooks. Activities were matched to the criteria of analysis. Then, they were categorized into two groups: learner-centered and non-learner-centered ones.

Unit of analysis: The activity was used as the unit of analysis.

Criteria of analysis

The following criteria of analysis were used to analyze the activities of the textbooks: (1) authentic materials; (2) activities which utilize group work; (3) real-life related activities. The criteria were derived from following learner centered principles:

(1) Engage all the learners in the lesson by using a lot of pair work and group work.
(2) Make the learners, and not the teacher, focus on the lesson by encouraging them to participate effectively.
(3) Take the students' individual differences into consideration by varying the teaching techniques.
(4) Promote humanistic relations.
(5) Give the students enough time to think before they respond.
(6) Use a maximum amount of student to student interaction in a relaxed atmosphere similar to real life situations.
(7) Develop learners' confidence by telling the students verbally and nonverbally that you believe in them and by using extrinsic and intrinsic motivation.
(8) Link the new knowledge with the existing one in mind.
(9) Provide opportunities for the students to apply what they learn.
(10) Respond to learners' difficulties and build on them.
(11) Provide the students with opportunities to practise both accuracy and fluency.
(12) Address learners' needs and interests and develop their responsibility for their own learning.

Validity and reliability of the instrument

To establish validity, the content analysis criteria were given to a group of experts, they were asked to give their judgment, and their modifications were adopted accordingly.

The following steps were used to guarantee the reliability of content analysis:

(1) The learner-centered activities using the unit and the criteria of analysis were analyzed.

(2) The analysis was repeated two weeks after the first analysis using the same unit and criteria of analysis. Then, the congruence between the two analyses was calculated. Its value was 92%.

(3) Another colleague was asked to analyze learner-centered activities using the same unit and criteria of analysis. Then the congruence between the two analyses was calculated. It was 90.

Procedures for data collection and data analysis

The following procedures were used to collect and analyze the data of this study:

(1) The related literature about content analysis to define the unit and criteria of analysis was reviewed. Theywere used in content analyzing *Say It In English* textbooks for learner-centered activities.

(2) The learner- centered activities were analyzed using the unit and the criteria of analysis mentioned under the first procedure.

(3) The analysis was repeated two weeks after the first analysis using the same unit and criteria of analysis. Then, the congruence between the two analyses was calculated.

(4) One colleague analyzed learner- centered activities using the same unit and criteria of analysis. Then the congruence between the two analyseswas calculated.

(5) Frequencies and percentages were used to interpret and discuss the findings of the study.

Findings of the study

Table 1 presents frequencies and percentages of the first criterion (authentic materials). This criterion develops learners'self-confidence and provides them with both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. In addition, it provides the students with opportunities to practise both accuracy and fluency.Moreover, it addresses learners' needs and interests and develops their responsibility for their own learning.

Table 1
Frequencies and Percentages of the Authentic Material Activities and the Non Authentic Material Activities in both the Pupil's Book and the Workbook

Unit	Title of the unit	Frequencies of authentic material activities		Frequencies of non- authentic material activities		Total frequencies of activities in each unit
		Pupil's book	Work book	Pupil's book	Work book	
One	Learning Tools	12	3	18	4	37
Two	Making Plans	11	2	13	11	37
Three	Going to Places	4	8	21	4	37
Four	Revision	4	3	19	1	27
Five	Save Our Planet	12	3	13	6	34
Six	The Senses	2	2	23	9	36
Seven	Friendship	13	3	14	4	34
Eight	Revision	7	1	10	3	21
Nine	Inventions	7	3	10	5	25
Ten	Cultures	8	7	9	2	26
Eleven	Stories	2	4	17	4	27
Twelve	Revision	8	2	7	3	20
Thirteen	Healthy Eating	6	5	14	2	27
Fourteen	On the Phone	6	5	11	6	28
Fifteen	People Said	6	3	8	5	22
Sixteen	Revision	12	3	5	2	22
Total frequencies of activities		120	57	212	71	460
Percentages		26.1%	12.4%	46.1%	15.4%	100%

Table 1shows that the percentage of authentic material activities was 38.5% which is less than non-authentic material activities which constitute 61.5% of the total activities. Table 2 presents the inclusion of activities which utilize group work. Including such activities engage all the learners in the lesson. They also make the learners, and not the teacher, the focus of the lesson by encouraging them to participate effectively. In addition, they take the students' individual differences into consideration by varying the teaching techniques. Moreover, they promote humanistic relations among the learners. They give the students enough time to think before they respond. Finally, they use the maximum amount of student- to- student interaction in a relaxed atmosphere similar to real life situations.

Table 2

Frequencies and Percentages of theGroup Work Activities and the Non Group Work Activities in both the Pupil's Book and the Workbook

Unit	Title of the unit	Frequencies of group work activities		Frequencies of non –group work activities		Total frequencies of activities in each unit
		Pupil's book	Work book	Pupil's book	Work book	
One	Learning Tools	0	0	30	7	37
Two	Making Plans	1	0	23	13	37
Three	Going to Places	1	0	24	12	37
Four	Revision	2	0	21	4	27
Five	Save Our Planet	1	0	24	9	34
Six	The Senses	0	0	25	11	36
Seven	Friendship	2	0	25	7	34
Eight	Revision	6	0	11	4	21
Nine	Inventions	0	0	17	8	25
Ten	Cultures	0	0	17	9	26
Eleven	Stories	1	0	18	8	27
Twelve	Revision	1	0	14	5	20
Thirteen	Healthy Eating	0	0	20	7	27
Fourteen	On the Phone	2	0	15	11	28
Fifteen	People Said	1	0	13	8	22
Sixteen	Revision	3	0	14	5	22
Total frequencies of activities		21	0	311	128	460
Percentages		4.6%	0%	67.6%	27.8%	100%

It is clear from table 2 that group work activities constitute only 4.6% of the total percentage of activities which is very low. Table 3 presents the incorporation of the third criterion (real-life related activities) to the total activities. Such activities provide opportunities for the students to apply what they learn. They also help the teachers respond to learners' difficulties and build on them. Moreover, they link the new knowledge with the existing one in mind.

Table 3

Frequencies and Percentages of the real-life related Activities and the Non Real-Life Related Activities in both the Pupil's Book and Workbook

Unit	Title of the unit	Frequencies of real-life related activities		Frequencies of non –real-life related activities		Total frequencies of activities in each unit
		Pupil's book	Work book	Pupil's book	Work book	
One	Learning Tools	14	3	16	4	37
Two	Making Plans	8	5	16	8	37
Three	Going to Places	5	4	20	8	37
Four	Revision	9	3	14	1	27
Five	Save Our Planet	9	2	16	7	34
Six	The Senses	8	3	17	8	36
Seven	Friendship	15	2	12	5	34
Eight	Revision	6	1	11	3	21
Nine	Inventions	5	3	12	5	25
Ten	Cultures	4	5	13	4	26
Eleven	Stories	4	3	15	5	27
Twelve	Revision	8	2	7	3	20
Thirteen	Healthy Eating	6	5	14	2	27
Fourteen	On the Phone	7	2	10	9	28
Fifteen	People Said	4	7	10	1	22
Sixteen	Revision	13	0	4	5	22
Total frequencies of activities		125	50	207	78	460
Percentages		27%	11%	45%	17%	100%

Table 3 shows that the percentage of real life related activities is 38%, it is less than the activities that do not implement real life characteristics which constitute 62% of the total activities.

Discussion and recommendations

The researcher analyzed the activities of the third intermediate grade English textbooks to find out the extent to which they were learner-centered. He wanted to find out whether those activities focused on learners' needs, styles, and goals. He analyzed the activities to find out whether the language teaching materials had the qualities of natural speech or writing. He meant to discover if they utilized group work. Moreover, he wanted to know whether the activities implemented real life characteristics.

Based on the criteria of analysis, the researcher analyzed the activities of the textbooks for learner-centeredness. The findings of the study showed that the number of learner-centered activities waslow compared to the non-learner-centered ones. The findings also indicated that the percentage of learner-centered activities seemed

inadequate to a certain extent. That was due to the fact that the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia adopted the communicative approach, in which the learner is the centre of the teaching learning process. Therefore, we should take into account that the textbooks consider the learner-centered approach as the main core of the textbooks.

In table 1, the findings showed that the percentage of the activities in which the language teaching materials have the qualities of natural speech or writing was 38.5%. Authentic material activities occurred 120 times in the pupils' book and 57 times in the work book out of 460, the total number of activities. For example, in the listen and practice exercises, the language teaching materials do not have the qualities of natural speech. The tapes are not taken from ordinary radio or television programs. In addition, most of the reading passages do not have the qualities of natural writing. They are not taken from newspapers or magazines. It is assumed that authentic materials are used in language teaching because they are considered interesting, engaging, culturally enlightening, relevant, and motivating. According to Herron (1994) empirical studies have confirmed the benefits of using authentic materials in classroom. Rivers (1987) maintains that students who work with authentic materials have an interest in the language that is based on what they know it can do for them. Cook (1996) suggests that one of the powerful reasons for learning a new language is to get closer to its speakers, to understand them better and take part in their lives, inother words the integrative motivation. Authentic materials utilize this motivation very strongly by their ordinariness and flavor of everyday life; they seem exotic and exciting. For students who have this motivation, authentic materials are a highly effective way of bringing the target culture closer; this is as near to participation as they will get without actually living in that country.

As for group work activities table 2 shows that they were used in very few activities, only 4.6% of the total percentage of activities. The instructions of the majority of the activities ask students to work individually on them. Group work activities promote interaction among teammates. By putting students in groups, teachers will give more language practice to the students. As students are more involved, they will feel secure and help each other to complete the tasks. Springer et.al. (1999) found that various types of small group learning were effective in producing higher academic achievement, more positive attitudes to learning, higher self-esteem and lower rates of drop out, than in conventional lecture-based courses.

Moreover, table 3 shows that the percentage of real life related activities was 38% which is less than the non-real- life related ones. For example, in grammar exercises, accuracy is emphasized rather than the intended messages. In addition, many of the speaking activities ask students to follow certain given patterns. Moreover, some activities ask students to complete dialogues with the correct forms of verbs. In real life we do not follow certain language function, but rather, we use the language communicatively. We do not care about sentence structure, we care about the message we intend to convey. There is an agreement among foreign/second language instructors that authentic language input can be utilized as an essential part of second language

learning. According to many scholars such as Brinton, Gebhard, Nunan, Martinez, Gilmore (just to name a few), there are many advantages associated to authentic language materials which make these materials pedagogically valuable to expose language learners to the target language. In this regard, Martinez (2002) provided a number of sound advantages for using authentic language materials for language teaching. An important advantage is that authentic language materials provide a wide range of language change of the target language. For example, by listening to songs and stories in the target language, language learner will be able to hear dialectal differences of various countries that speak the target language (Martinez, 2002). According to Brinton (1991) authentic materials and media can strengthen the direct relationship between the language classroom and the outside world for students. Gebhard (1996) considered authentic materials as a way to contextualize language learning. When lessons are focused on comprehending, language learners tend to concentrate more on content and meaning rather than the language itself. This offers the language learners a valuable source of authentic language input, so that they are not exposed only to the language presented by the text and the teacher.

Student-centered teaching methods shift the focus of activity from the teacher to the learners. Students will have a higher motivation to learn when they feel they have an effective role in their own learning. Instead of the teacher being the sole source of information, he shares the control of the classroom and students are allowed to explore, experiment, and discover on their own. The instructor acts as a coach and a facilitator. In many respects, the goal of this type of teaching is the development of the students' cognitive abilities. Therefore, the activities should be designed in a way which let the students initiate and discover meaningful information for their own lives.

Group work provides the students with opportunities to use the language without the fear of committing mistakes in front of the rest of the class which might make them feel embarrassed. The students feel responsible for their own learning in the learner-centered activities. This is done by making the students cooperate with their groups to find out solutions to given problems, and then competed with the other groups and tried to convince them with their points of view. Linking the new language that the students learn with real life situations helps the students to internalize what they learn. Therefore, the students should be provided with activities in which they related what they learn to real life situations.

Contrary to the many research findings conducted in this field, the findings of this study indicated that the percentage of learner-centered activities seemed inadequate to a certain extent. For example, Warburton and Whitehouse (1998) found that in learner- centeredness, most student- generated objectives were met. Chan (2001) found that students demonstrated positive attitudes towards autonomous approach. Garrett and Shortall (2002) discovered that students were interested in learner- centered activities as they move up through the language level. A lot of research that was conducted in this field found that it is necessary to care for learner's conceptions and beliefs about the nature of knowledge and learning process in adopting learner- centered

models since the learner- centered approach models improve the students' learning and motivation (Pillay, 2002; Van Aswegen and Dreyer, 2004; Kasanda et al., 2005; Good and Robertson, 2006; Crick et al., 2007; Macaulay and Nagley, 2008; Vazaka, 2009). Moreover, collaborative learning and good learning environments should be stressed since the students assume full responsibility for their own learning in such environments (Alfassi, 2004; Nokelaien et.al., 2005). Such findings suggested the necessity to use learner- centered approach in the teaching/ learning process (Nunan, 1988; Brown, 2001; Omaggio, 2001; Chan, 2001; Zaharias and Poulymenakou, 2006).

Recommendations

In light of the findings of the present study, the researcher has the following recommendations:

(1) The learner-centered approach activities should be incorporated more in the English language textbooks.

(2) Learner-centered, safe, challenging, authentic, and collaborative environments should be established in the teaching/ learning process in a way that promotes active learning.

(3) The understanding of the learner-centered approach as well as its implementation in the classrooms should be used more.

(4) More voice inside the classrooms should be given to the students by engaging every student in the classroom activities.

(5) There should be real shift from teacher- centeredness to student- centeredness.

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