NTU Journal for Administrative and Human Sciences 2024 214 - 240
DOI: https://doi.org/10.56286/ntujahs.

IRAQI Academic Scientific Journals

JAHS NTU

P-ISSN: 2789-1240 E-ISSN:2789-1259

NTU Journal for Administrative and Human Sciences

Available online at: https://journals.ntu.edu.iq/index.php/NTU-JMS/index

The Role of Using Authentic Materials in Developing Students' Speaking Skills in Iraqi Schools

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Article Informations

Received: 1. 5. 2024
Accepted: 155. 2024
Published online: 1. 6. 2024

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Key Words:
Authentic materials, develop, integrating, curricula, pedagogical

A B S T R A C T

This study explores the pivotal role of authentic materials in fostering the development of students' speaking skills within Iraqi educational settings. The methodology of this study is quantitative. It aimed to investigate the efficacy of incorporating authentic materials in language instruction. Through meticulous analysis of data gathered from students in Iraqi schools, the findings illuminate the positive impact of utilizing authentic materials on students' speaking proficiency. The study reveals a significant correlation between exposure to authentic materials and enhanced speaking abilities, emphasizing the crucial role such materials play in language acquisition and communication competence. The results assure the importance of integrating authentic materials into language learning curricula to cultivate students' speaking skills effectively. By incorporating real-world materials such as newspapers, videos, and authentic texts, educators can create immersive learning experiences that resonate with students' interests and contexts. This abstract highlights the implications of the findings for language education in Iraq and underscores the need for continued research and pedagogical innovation in leveraging authentic materials to optimize students' speaking proficiency..

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دور استخدام المواد الأصلية في تطوير مهارات التحدث لدى الطلاب في المدارس العراقية

The Role of Using Authentic Materials in Developing Students' Speaking Skills in Iraqi Schools

الباحث: م.م ندى عيسى بشت

كلية المنصور الجامعة

الملخص

تستكشف هذه الدراسة الدور الأساسي للمواد الأصلية في تعزيز تطوير مهارات الكلام لدى الطلاب ضمن البيئات التعليمية العراقية. تتبع هذه الدراسة منهجية كمية، وتهدف إلى التحقيق في فعالية دمج المواد الأصلية في تعليم اللغة. من خلال تحليل دقيق للبيانات المجمعة من الطلاب في المدارس العراقية، تسلط النتائج الضوء على الأثر الإيجابي لاستخدام المواد الأصلية على كفاءة الطلاب في الكلام. تكشف الدراسة عن وجود علاقة معتبرة بين التعرض للمواد الأصلية وتحسين قدرات الكلام، مما يؤكد على الدور الحيوي الذي تلعبه هذه المواد في اكتساب اللغة والكفاءة التواصلية. تؤكد النتائج على أهمية دمج المواد الأصلية في المناهج التعليمية للغات لتنمية مهارات الكلام لدى الطلاب بفعالية. من خلال إدماج مواد من العالم الحقيقي مثل الصحف، الفيديوهات، والنصوص الأصلية، يمكن للمعلمين خلق تجارب تعلم مكثفة تتردد صداها مع اهتمامات الطلاب وسياقاتهم. يبرز هذا الملخص تداعيات النتائج على تعليم اللغة في العراق ويؤكد على الحاجة لاستمرار البحث والابتكار التربوي في استخدام المواد الأصلية لتعظيم كفاءة الطلاب في الكلام .

Introduction

In Iraq, as in many other educational contexts, the role of using authentic materials in developing students' speaking skills holds significant importance. Authentic materials refer to real-life resources such as newspapers, podcasts, YouTube videos, Telegram, Facebook, Twitter, and texts that reflect real language usage in natural contexts. Albiladi (2019) denotes that "integrating authentic materials into language learning not only enhances linguistic proficiency but also fosters cultural understanding and critical thinking." Fitria (2022) indicates that "by engaging with materials that mirror real-world language use, students are exposed to authentic vocabulary, expressions, and cultural nuances, thereby facilitating more meaningful communication." This approach encourages students to move beyond rote memorization and textbook exercises, empowering them to engage in authentic conversations with confidence and fluency. In the Iraqi educational landscape, getting advantages of authentic materials in speaking activities serves as a catalyst for language acquisition and cultural competence, equipping students with the skills necessary for effective communication in diverse contexts.

Authentic materials are resources crafted for native speakers of a language, as opposed to being tailored specifically for language learners. Thomas (2014) indicates that "they are invaluable tools for language acquisition as they immerse learners in genuine language contexts, showcasing idiomatic expressions, slang, cultural references, and various language registers." By

engaging with authentic materials, learners can hone their language skills in settings that mirror real-life communication scenarios. Huda (2017) denotes that "while many English courses provide instructors with structured textbooks or curricula, which can aid in course design, learning outcomes determination, and student assessment, not all institutions offer these resources."

Murdoch, Y. (1999). Denote than "in instances where prescribed curricula are absent or where instructors seek to provide students with engaging English practice opportunities, authentic materials offer a compelling alternative."

Authentic materials are designed for actual communication rather than instructional purposes, facilitating meaningful language acquisition experiences. Abbasian et al. (2016) argue that "authentic materials for English language classrooms are readily accessible online. Examples include TV shows, news segments, documentaries, online videos, podcasts, photographs, advertisements, magazines, letters, emails, websites, and social media posts." Despite their benefits, incorporating authentic materials into the classroom poses both advantages and challenges. Killen and O'Toole (2023) argue that "effective teaching strategies are essential for maximizing their instructional potential." Activities typically aim to activate and build students' background knowledge, expand vocabulary, enhance comprehension, and incorporate summative tasks. These strategies can be adapted to suit various authentic materials selected for students' learning needs (Beninghof, 2020).

Authentic materials offer real instances of language usage in everyday contexts. Xian et al. (2024) believe that "these authentic materials can enhance learner engagement and serve as a gentle nudge, reminding learners that the language they're acquiring is actively used by entire populations in their daily routines." David and Şerban-Oprescu (2019) think that "classrooms integrate language teaching strategies with specific materials, aiming to aid students in achieving their primary goal of enhancing their English proficiency and knowledge." It's crucial to recognize the motivational benefits of incorporating authentic materials, as they not only possess educational value but also prompt students to engage in discussions about their opinions, emotions, and past experiences. Cazac (2020) denotes that "benefits of using authentic materials could be used in teaching and learning English in schools. Learners must have opportunities to employ language for communication rather than solely practicing it in teacher-controlled settings.

Clarifying the **statement of the problem** for investigating this topic includes several critical aspects. Firstly, within the context of foreign language education in Iraq, there exists a significant emphasis on developing students' speaking proficiency in English. However, educators often encounter challenges in motivating students to actively engage in spoken communication, particularly in a language learning environment. Additionally, the efficacy of using authentic materials, such as real-life texts and multimedia resources, in facilitating speaking skill development remains underexplored. Given the potential benefits of authentic materials in

enhancing language learning outcomes, there is a pressing need to examine their role specifically in the Iraqi educational setting. This inquiry aims to address whether incorporating authentic materials as a teaching strategy can effectively foster students' speaking abilities and overcome the barriers to oral communication commonly observed in language classrooms in Iraqi schools.

The main theory that could be applied to this study is the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) theory (Ju, 2013). It emphasizes the importance of communication as the primary goal of language learning. It focuses on providing learners with authentic materials and real-life situations to develop their language skills, including speaking. In the context of Iraqi schools, using authentic materials such as newspapers, magazines, videos, and recordings that reflect real-life language usage can enhance students' speaking skills by exposing them to natural language patterns, vocabulary, and cultural contexts. CLT also emphasizes meaningful interaction and task-based activities where students engage in communicative tasks that require speaking. By incorporating authentic materials into communicative activities, teachers can create opportunities for students to practice speaking in context, express themselves creatively, and develop their fluency and accuracy. However, applying the principles of CLT can be highly beneficial in enhancing students' speaking skills in Iraqi schools by integrating authentic materials into the language learning process.

Significance of the Study: Many educators emphasize the pivotal role of teaching materials and classroom dynamics in facilitating learners' effective utilization of English language

resources, thereby aiding their progress. Teachers significantly influence the teaching approach and strategies employed, and the integration of authentic materials can potentially enhance students' oral performance and proficiency, particularly within Iraqi educational contexts. It is imperative for teachers to recognize the contribution of authentic materials in oral expression teaching, as these materials align with learners' objectives. **The study aims to investigate this question**: To what extent can the use of authentic materials develop students 'speaking skills in their classrooms from the English teachers' and the English supervisors' point of view in Iraq? It is expected that using the authentic materials can develop students 'speaking skills in their classrooms from the English teachers' and the English supervisors' point of view in Iraq. The following **definitions of terms** are defined as follows:

Authentic Materials: According to Gilmore (2007) include resources crafted for genuine purposes beyond language instruction, frequently originating from native speakers for native speakers. These materials serve real-world objectives and are not exclusively tailored for language learning endeavors. Huda (2017) defines authentic materials that they are resources utilized in teaching, such as texts, photographs, videos, and other materials not initially intended for educational purposes. Conversely, created materials include textbooks and other materials specifically designed for instructional use.

Speaking Skill: According to Bygate (2009), speaking involves generating auditory signals to elicit various verbal reactions from

listeners. Bashir (2011) proposes that speaking skill constitutes an interactive endeavor aimed at constructing meaning, encompassing the production, reception, and processing of information.

The role of using authentic materials in developing students' speaking skill in Iraqi schools plays a big role in developing their ability in the field of speaking process. Merchi's (2012) study suggests that "employing authentic materials can facilitate students' meaningful integration into the target language and foster self-confidence." Qamariah and Ilmiah (2016) suggest that "authentic materials are those designed for native English speakers and utilized in the classroom in a manner similar to their original intent." Marpaung and Situmeang (2020) state that "authentic materials encompass print, video, and audio resources encountered in students' everyday lives. These include various documents like change of address forms, job applications, menus, as well as audiovisual content such as voice mail messages, radio programs, and videos."

Huda (2017) indicates that authentic materials are not tailored for classroom use but serve as effective educational aids precisely because of their authenticity. They can be categorized into print resources like websites, newspapers, magazines, and TV guides, as well as auditory materials such as radio broadcasts, and video content including movies. The key lies in employing these materials authentically rather than relying on traditional school-based

approaches. The manner in which teachers utilize authentic materials is often determined by their intended purpose or function.

The following **previous studies** enrich this topic. They provide an idea about the role of using authentic materials in developing students' speaking skills in Iraq. Merchi (2012) conducted a study investigating the impact of authentic materials on student motivation and speaking proficiency within classroom settings. It aimed to explore the use of authentic materials as a motivational strategy for enhancing speaking skills among first-year English learners at Mohammed Kheider University of Biskra's Department of English. The study sought to verify hypotheses regarding the benefits of using authentic materials, specifically whether their implementation by teachers would improve students' speaking proficiency and if a creative approach to utilizing such materials would further motivate learners to enhance their speaking abilities. To achieve these objectives, the study employed questionnaires administered to both teachers and students, along with classroom observations. Analysis of the teacher questionnaire revealed a preference for authentic materials, particularly audiovisual resources such as videos and role-playing activities. Meanwhile, analysis of the

student questionnaire uncovered psychological barriers faced by participants, including anxiety, lack of self-confidence in verbal expression, and difficulties in accurately using the language, leading to hesitation and reduced fluency and accuracy levels. The study's findings suggest that the use of authentic materials can play a

significant role in fostering meaningful integration into the target language and boosting students' self-confidence.

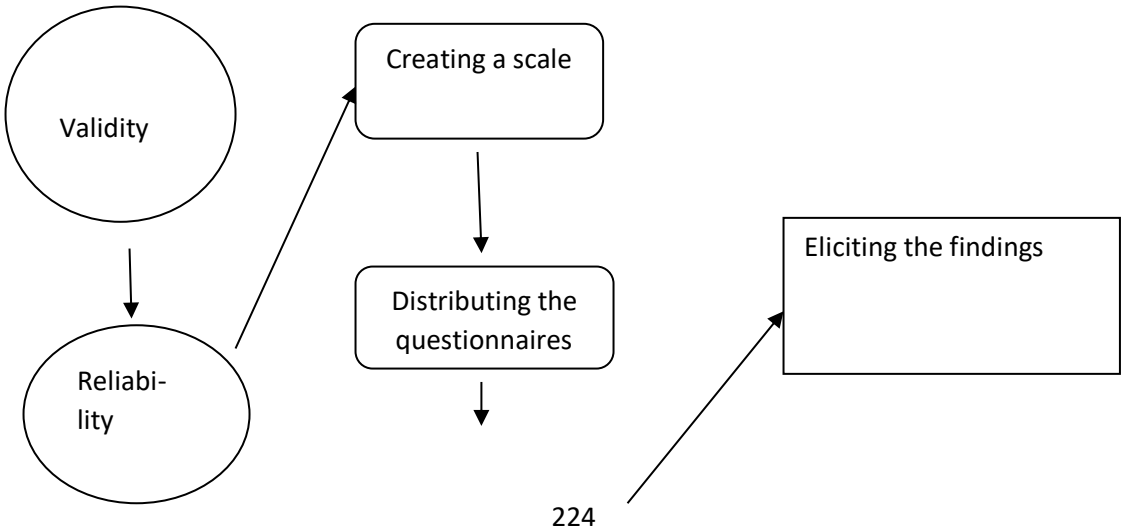
Alfa's (2020) study aimed to explore the use of podcasts as authentic materials to enhance students' speaking skills. Podcasts, a form of digital media containing recorded programs from television, radio, and interviews, offer valuable audio resources featuring native English speakers. By providing authentic language models, podcasts have the potential to aid language learners in improving their speaking proficiency. Numerous researchers advocate for the use of podcasts as an effective alternative for enhancing students' speaking abilities. Seo and Chan (2011) suggest that podcasts can serve as readily accessible authentic materials for teachers to incorporate into their teaching practices. In this context, teachers serve as facilitators in utilizing podcasts both within and outside the classroom to support students in improving their speaking skills.

Huda (2017) conducted a study aiming to explore the beliefs of Indonesian EFL teachers regarding the utilization of authentic materials in State Islamic Junior High Schools located in South Tangerang. Six English teachers participated in the completion of a survey questionnaire and interviews for this investigation. The findings revealed a predominantly positive attitude among English teachers towards the integration of authentic materials in their classrooms, with a preference for their usage. However, analysis highlighted concerns among some teachers regarding the selection of appropriate authentic materials and the

design of related activities. The study carries significant educational implications, particularly for English teachers, suggesting a need for further training in effectively utilizing authentic materials. Recommendations for future research may include focusing on the development of materials

utilizing authentic resources, incorporating classroom observations, and assessing post-observation practices to gauge the effectiveness of authentic material usage. However, the study suggests expanding participation to include teachers from various schools to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the topic.

Research Methodology: This study is quantitative. It analyzes the role of using authentic materials in developing students' speaking skill in Iraqi schools. It is an analytical case study. It is the appropriate method for studying social phenomena. It requires building a suitable scale in order to investigate the aims of this study. It actually covers the content of this study. The following figure clarifies the research design:



Analyzing data by using SPSS statistical program

Building the scale of this study depends on two variables that cover the aims of this study. The scale covers the items that clarify the role of using authentic materials in developing students' speaking skill in Iraqi schools (**See appendix 1 at the end of this study**). **The study population** consists of all English language teachers and English language supervisors who are currently working at Iraqi schools and the Ministry of Education. **The sample** consists of 20 English teachers and 8 English supervisors (females and males). The participants are chosen according to snowball sampling. All the participants have good

experience in their job. The researcher uses this snowball sampling to find them by asking more questions until he finds them. Then, he asks them to participate in this study. There are many guidelines to follow when choosing a research tool. Harmer (2006) defines "validity" as "the test should evaluate what it is intended to measure. It speaks to how easily conclusions drawn from a small sample can be applied to a larger population. This scale which consists of 10 items is judged by a group of doctors who have the same major in order to be distributed to the participants of this study. It adopted this scale as data collection tool from the research community. It is used for the purpose of testing the stability of the tool and knowing the accuracy of the consistency of the items with the objectives of

the study and its main question, (Cronbach alpha). The following **table (1)** shows the degree of validity of the research tool.

Table 1: Tool Stability Coefficient (Cronbach Alpha).

No.	Parameter	Cron
1.	Authentic materials and students' speaking skill	.8320

Research Tool: According to the requirements of this study, the scale is built by the researcher. The study consists of two variables (Authentic materials and students' speaking skill). The scale includes 10 items (**See appendix 1 at the end of this research**). It is judged by a jury of experts and specialized doctors who have the same major. Some items are already added, omitted, or justified. It mainly concentrates on the role of using authentic materials in developing students' speaking skill in Iraqi schools. The 5-point Likert scale is used in this study. It offers a straightforward psychometric approach for respondents to express their opinions and degree of agreement across five points. It encompasses the following options: (1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly Agree (Nemoto, and Beglar, 2014). According to Likert's five-point scale, the participants' answers are strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. This research tool is divided into two parameters: The first parameter

includes 6 items (from 1 to 6) that refer to the English teachers' point of view toward the role of using authentic materials in developing students' speaking skill in Iraqi schools. While the second parameter includes 4 items (from 7 to 10) that refer to the English language supervisors toward the subject of this topic.

Study Procedures and Statistical analysis: After preparing the scale, it was distributed to the participants who currently work at Iraqi schools and the Ministry of Education. The researcher clarified the purpose of this study and discussed the procedures of answering the items of the scale. Then, he asked them to answer the items accurately. Their answers are studied carefully and treated statistically. SPSS statistical grogram is used in order to elicit the answer of the research question. Some of the statistical tests are conducted such as Standard Mean, Standard Deviation, The Descriptive Frequency Test, 2 Tailed-Significance, Variance Test, and other required statistical tests. The respondents' comments and their interpretations are taken into consideration seriously. Then, the results are elicited and discussed carefully. Finally, some recommendations are stated according to this research finding.

The following **research result** is discussed and answered carefully. **The main research question** is: To what extent can the use of authentic materials develop students 'speaking skills in their classrooms from the English teachers' and the English supervisors' point of view in Iraqi schools? For the sake of developing the

students' speaking skills, the use of authentic materials is needed. Adapting the content of authentic materials is mostly needed to develop the students' speaking skills. To answer the research question, it is necessary to have a look on the English teachers' point of view.

Table 2: *The Mean, Standard Deviation, 2-tailed Significance (Alfa = or less than 0. 05), Frequency Test, and the Variance Test*

One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 0					
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	Df	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Alpha or Sig. (2-tailed)	Frequency	Variance
Item 1	20	4.8000	.52315	.000	92.2 %	0.274
Item 2	20	4.7000	.80131	.000	93.0 %	0.274
Item 3	20	4.8500	.48936	.000	89.4 %	0.239
Item 4	20	4.8000	.52315	.000	91.3 %	0.274
Item 5	20	4.7000	.80131	.000	93.5 %	0.274
Item 6	20	4.8500	.48936	.000	90.0 %	0.239

Table 2 shows that the average Mean of the six items **(See appendix 1 at the end of this research)** is 4.753 with an average Standard Deviation (SD) 0.60460. This Mean is considered high. Besides, the average Frequency of the above items is 91.6 %. The

average Variance of these items is 0.262. The two tailed Significance is 0.00 %. This means that Alpha is less than 0.05%. If Alpha = or less than 0.05%, it means that the result is positive. According to the English language teachers' responses, there is a positive role of using authentic materials in developing students' speaking skill in Iraqi schools. Authentic materials significantly enhance students' speaking skills in the English classroom. English teachers believe that integrating authentic materials is crucial for improving students' speaking abilities. Authentic materials facilitate a more engaging and interactive environment for practicing speaking in English classrooms. They feel adequately supported in incorporating authentic materials into their speaking lessons. English teachers believe that using authentic materials encourages students to speak more confidently and fluently. They perceive a noticeable improvement in students' speaking skills when authentic materials are regularly integrated into lessons.

As a result, the role of using authentic materials in developing students' speaking skill in Iraqi schools is significant. This is consistent with Ju's (2013) theory, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). It focuses on providing learners with authentic materials and real-life situations to develop their language skills, including speaking. The result of this study also aligns with Huda's (2017) study. It indicated that English teachers generally hold a favorable stance toward incorporating authentic materials into their classrooms, showing a preference for their utilization. Nonetheless, the analysis underscored reservations among certain teachers

regarding the selection of suitable authentic materials and the development of associated activities.

To continue answering the same research question, it is crucial to have a look at the English language supervisors' point of view.

Table 3: *The Mean, Standard Deviation, 2-tailed Significance (Alfa = or less than 0. 05), Frequency Test, and the Variance Test.*

One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 0					
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	Df	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Alpha or Sig. (2-tailed)	Frequency	Variance
Item 7	8	4.8500	.53733	0.000	93.8 %	0.239
Item 8	8	4.8000	.52315	0.000	90.6 %	0.274
Item 9	8	4.6250	.40131	0.000	92.6 %	0.275
Item 10	8	4.7500	.80132	0.000	91.4 %	0.248

Table 3 shows that the average Mean of the four items **(See appendix 1 at the end of this research)** is 4.731 with an average Standard Deviation (SD) 0.53441. This Mean is considered high. Besides, the average Frequency of the above items is 91.8 %. The average Variance of these items is 0.241. The two tailed Significance is 0.00 %. This means that Alpha is less than 0.05%.

If Alpha = or less than 0.05%, it means that the result is positive. According to the English language supervisors' answers, there is a positive role of using

authentic materials in developing students' speaking skill in Iraqi schools. Authentic materials significantly enhance students' speaking skills in the English classroom. English language supervisors perceive the use of authentic materials as an effective method for developing students' speaking skills. They provide sufficient guidance and resources for English teachers to utilize authentic materials effectively. They recognize the importance of authentic materials in aligning classroom instruction with real-world language use. They believe that prioritizing the use of authentic materials is essential for enhancing the overall quality of English language education in Iraqi classrooms.

Consequently, the result of this study aligns with Merchi's (2012) study. It indicated that the use of authentic materials can play a significant role in fostering meaningful integration into the target language and boosting students' self-confidence. It also agrees with Ju's (2013) theory, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). It concentrates on providing learners with authentic materials and real-life situations to develop their language skills, including speaking.

As a conclusion, this study has shed light on the significant role of authentic materials in enhancing students' speaking skills within Iraqi schools. Through the utilization of a quantitative

methodology, the findings have consistently demonstrated the positive impact of integrating authentic materials into language learning contexts. This asserts the importance of incorporating real-world materials such as newspapers, videos, and authentic texts to enrich students' speaking abilities. As educators continue to navigate the landscape of language instruction in Iraq, prioritizing the integration of authentic materials stands as a promising approach to fostering communicative competence and empowering students to engage confidently in spoken language interactions. By recognizing and leveraging the value of authentic materials, educators can cultivate a learning environment that cultivates fluency, accuracy, and cultural competency in students' speaking proficiency.

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Appendix 1

Dear English language teachers: ..... (Your name is not necessary)

This study is conducted for having an idea about the role of using authentic materials in developing students' speaking skills in Iraqi schools. Please read the following items and answer them carefully. Your responses are important for investigating the aims of this study. Your responses will also be discussed carefully and accurately.

No.	Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Neu–tral	Dis–agree	St. Dis–agree
1.	Authentic materials significantly enhance students' speaking skills in the English classroom.		Agree			
2.	English teachers believe that integrating authentic materials is crucial for improving students' speaking abilities.			Neutral		
3.	Authentic materials facilitate a more engaging and interactive environment for practicing speaking in English classrooms.		Agree			
4.	English teachers feel adequately supported in		Agree			

	incorporating authentic materials into their speaking lessons.					
5.	English teachers believe that using authentic materials encourages students to speak more confidently and fluently.	Strongly agree				
6.	English teachers perceive a noticeable improvement in students' speaking skills when authentic materials are regularly integrated into lessons.	Strongly agree				

Thanks a lot for your cooperation

The researcher:

Nada Eissa

Dear English language supervisors: ..... (Your name is not necessary)

This study is conducted for having an idea about the role of using authentic materials in developing students' speaking skill in Iraqi schools. Please read the following items and answer them carefully. Your responses are important for investigating the aims of this study. Your responses will also be discussed carefully and accurately.

7.	English supervisors perceive the use of authentic materials as an effective method for developing students' speaking skills.	Strongly agree				
8.	English supervisors provide sufficient guidance and resources for English teachers to utilize authentic materials effectively.		Agree			
9.	English supervisors recognize the importance of authentic materials in aligning classroom		Agree			

	instruction with real–world language use.					
10.	English supervisors believe that prioritizing the use of authentic materials is essential for enhancing the overall quality of English language education in Iraqi classrooms.		Agree			

Thanks a lot for your cooperation

The researcher: Nada Eissa