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# The Effects of Realia in EFL Classes

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## **Dedication**

This thesis is a heartfelt tribute to our loving parents, friends, and teachers who have supported us and wished us success.

And lastly, this research paper is dedicated to teachers who wish to utilize effective tools to enhance the language learning process.

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## Section one

### 1. Introduction

In this introductory section, there will be a brief discussion of “The Effects of Realia in EFL classes.”

English is a widely used worldwide language, serving as a source of information across various countries. Numerous techniques can be employed to improve students' learning processes, and effective learning techniques, such as realia, are increasingly utilized. Realia has been a recognized teaching tool in language classrooms. However, realia in the classroom enhances student understanding and learning by visualizing real-life objects.

This study explores the effectiveness of realia by examining how it can improve vocabulary memory, promote cultural awareness, and boost student engagement and motivation, among numerous other benefits.

Realia is a new teaching technique that enhances students' understanding, speaking, reading, listening, and writing skills because effective teaching incorporates variety, assistance, social warmth, and other elements that make learning enjoyable for students. These items are used by teachers to teach children about different cultures and the difficulties they face in real life. Realia is widely used in foreign language schools to help students understand the connections between words used to describe everyday items and those used for other purposes. Effective teaching is frequently accompanied not just by good learning but also by happy learning. (Alkuli,1999:12)

Classroom content often lacks connection with real-world Examples due to discipline complexity. Realia, such as *virtual, magazines, pictures, and songs, videos, toys, advertisements,* are used in classrooms to provide educational and illustrative resources, which are effective and have positive implications. Introducing real-life objects in classes enhances classroom diversity, motivation, engagement, attention, and learning by providing fresh feelings and a fresh perspective.

The term "English as a Foreign Language" (EFL) refers to the study of English by non-native speakers in nations where the language is not the official one. (Nordquist, 2020)

Alkhuli (1999:10) states that there are two distinct types of FL programs. The first one is the school program, where the FL is taught like any other school subject, and the second type of FL is the intensive one. Here the foreign language (FL) is taught as the only subject to a special group of learners. EFL teachers assist non-native English speakers in improving their language

skills through reading, writing, and conversation in English. They work in public education and private tuition, promoting a rewarding career path for those passionate about teaching and linguistic improvement.

The research project comprises four distinct sections. The first section is an introduction that provides a comprehensive overview of the effects of realia in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes. Section two is the literature review that contains the definition of realia, the use of realia as an effective pedagogical tool, the importance of realia in EFL classes and the positive effects of realia in EFL classes...etc. Section three is devoted to experience and reflection with regard to the effects of realia in EFL classes and the impacts on student's learning. Lastly, the research concludes with conclusions, followed by a list of references.

## Section Two

### 2. Literature Review

The purpose of this section is to explore how realia affects EFL classes based on the data that has been provided, as well as the value and application of realia as an instructional instrument.

#### 2.1. Definition of Realia

In most of the world's nations, foreign language instruction has become significantly more popular in recent decades. As a result, a large portion of instructors' minds are focused on finding relevant and useful teaching materials. Being able to use a foreign language in situations and the actual world is the goal of learning it. As a result, the majority of language instructors question if employing course book tasks which are seen as artificial as they are created primarily for instructional purposes is sufficient for teaching language acquisition, or if they should switch to using real resources to support students' language learning. According to the Oxford Dictionary realia refers to objects and materials from everyday life, especially when used as teaching aids. "the industrial English language course makes extensive and varied use of realia, such as *specifications, extracts from company brochures, manuals, diagrams, etc.*"

Realia is simply defined as anything that is brought into the classroom that you or your students might experience in the actual world. This might be anything from their house, yours, or almost anywhere else, *like a store or the outdoors*. Using realia has the advantage of fitting almost any topic you're teaching, and most of the time the materials are simple to locate. *Videos, music, toys, instruction manuals, utility bills, periodicals, newspapers, recipe books, stuffed animals, office supplies, classroom supplies, restaurant menus, cereal/soap boxes, application forms, and train or bus tickets* are a few examples of realia (Bala, 2015). Realia real-world items that are utilised in the classroom to help students better appreciate different cultures and real-world scenarios. Educators use realia to help students better understand concepts. Realia is items from real life that teachers use in the classroom to help pupils better understand concepts and real-world resources that are accessible to or unavailable to them. Librarians view these items as belonging to a documentary whole since they are frequently included in instructional kits that come with manuals (Nordquist, 2020).

## 2.2. Types of Realia

Realia is a crucial component of all languages. They give speakers a means of discussing the world around them. A language would be far less expressive and worse without realia. Realia comes in two primary varieties: concrete and abstract. Things that are directly experienced through sight, touch, or other senses are known as concrete realia. Things that are only understandable through concepts or ideas are known as abstract realia. The two categories of concrete realia are physical and cultural. Physical realia include objects like structures and tools. Cultural realia comprises things such as customs and traditions. Additionally, there are two types of abstract realia: mental and social. Emotions and mental states are examples of mental realia. Relationships and institutions are examples of social realia (Bawa, 2016). According to Bawa (2017) that mentions the types of realia The instructor has access to various types of Realia. These are as follows:

1. The actual object being learned, which the learner may be able to see; examples include school supplies (*book, pencil, eraser, bag, pen, ruler, etc.*); objects in the classroom (*table, chair, blackboard, picture, chalk*); and bodily parts (*hand, hair, eyes, nose, ears, mouth, foot, etc.*).

2. A duplicate of the item in case it is not feasible to bring the original items into the classroom, such as vehicles (*bus, train, plane, motorcycle, etc.*) and professions (*doctor, soldier, steward*).

Any actual things connected to the material that pupils are learning are called realia. Students can interact with manipulatives such as plastic figures, flashcards, and blocks. These kinds of interactive graphics can be useful for enhancing subject-matter learning. This tactic can be utilised to assist all students' academic language development.

According to Irawan (2020) there are other examples of realia types—technology from bygone eras: *cassette tape, typewriter, and old-fashioned phone*. Natural objects include *discarded paper wasp nests, animal bones, snake skins, flowers, and plants*. Food: *entire spices and herbs, exotic fruit, and root veggies*. Work clothes include *scrubs, a firefighter's uniform, a construction helmet, and a postal worker's uniform*. Home furnishings: *egg beater*. Linking content to reality a terrarium full of plants could complement a science lesson on photosynthesis.

According to Amini, et al, there is another type of realia known as realia media. Realia media is the one straightforward, engaging medium that could inspire students who are reluctant to study English. Also audio media includes *radio, tape recorder, and telephone, visual media like pictures, magazines, and films, and audiovisual media like television, movies, and sound* (Bawa, 2017).



### **2.3. The Characteristics of Realia**

Real things are very compelling and encourage learners to retain the information. Realia can be found in many places for free or quite cheap. For those just starting, Realia's structural support is constructive.

Bawa, states the characteristics of realia (2017) as following:

Realia are related to real life.

- a. Realia are typically easier to transport and reach than the environments they inhabit as a whole.
- b. They are manipulable touchable, and attentive.
- c. They are affordable and easy.
- d. They are commonly available and reasonably priced.
- e. They appeal to the cognitive and emotive domains by fusing aspects of instruction with recreational activities.
- f. They could proceed from the reserve or the particular to the general.
- g. They frequently have meaning without words.

### **2.4. The Role of Realia in Memory Enhancement**

Realia is real-life classroom materials that enhance learning by providing a concrete understanding of abstract concepts, improving memory, and enhancing problem-solving, critical thinking, and cultural awareness while promoting cross-cultural awareness (Jordan, 2012). By using authentic objects from different cultures, students can engage with and appreciate the diversity of the world around them, leading to a more holistic and well-rounded education. (Hornby, 2010). Realia is a learning method that uses tangible objects to enhance memory recall, promoting multisensory experiences and increased retention of information by activating different brain regions in students (Dakowska, 2013). Integrating realia enhances sensory experiences and optimizes memory retention. Realia aids in memory enhancement by providing a physical representation of concepts, engaging multiple senses, and connecting abstract ideas with real-world examples, thus improving encoding and retention (Dikens, et al, 2017). Realia improves memory performance and learning outcomes by incorporating real-life objects, activating different brain areas, and fostering deeper understanding through practical experiences. It engages multiple senses, promoting long-term retention (Nunan, 1999).

## **2.5. The Role of Realia in Student's Learning Styles in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

In the 21st century, students' learning styles have evolved due to technology and information access, necessitating understanding for educators to create inclusive environments and enhance academic performance. For example, visual learners prefer visual reinforcements like *videos*, *pictures*, *diagrams*, and *flowcharts* due to their lower cognitive load. Incorporating visual learning strategies in educational settings can improve retention and understanding of material (Bjork, 2018). By breaking down information into visual chunks, learners process and retain information more effectively.

This approach optimizes learning outcomes and creates an inclusive educational environment, ensuring equal opportunities for all students to reach their full potential. Visual learners prefer visual aids and stimuli, such as *images*, *diagrams*, *charts*, or *videos*. Realia appeals to tactile and visual learners of all ages and strengthens language abilities. Realia is a common tool used by educators to explain vocabulary terms. Consider the distinction between teaching learners the names of fruits and displaying the actual fruit to them so they can make up the name. The teacher will instruct students in the terminology of fruits and vegetables. Students may benefit from the new word much more if they can simultaneously see, smell, and touch the objects. Compared to a basic flashcard image of a fruit or vegetable, this would be more appealing to a larger variety of learning styles.

## **2.6. Realia Usage in EFL Classes**

Goldstein states that (2008) preparing and selecting appropriate realia is essential for efficient instruction in EFL classes. This entails taking into account the realia's potential to engage and motivate students in addition to its cultural relevance and degree of difficulty. Teachers can integrate realia into lesson activities, using personal items for conversation starters and surveys, to enhance language development. Cultural backgrounds and beliefs should be considered when selecting realia to avoid misunderstandings or offense (Amini, et al. 2021). Offering opportunities for students to explore and discuss the significance of the chosen realia can deepen their understanding and appreciation of different cultures.

Organizing activities and tasks around realia. Realia can boost student engagement and motivation by incorporating real objects or materials into activities, creating a dynamic and interactive classroom environment. This fosters collaboration and communication, making lessons more memorable and enjoyable for students by providing real examples (Jorden, 2012). Realia discussions in pairs or small groups help students practice speaking, listening, vocabulary, and grammar. Role-playing in realia enhances language skills, cultural understanding, and communication (Subdi, 2012). Teachers can make language classes more engaging by using realia—common things that students can handle and engage with. This can be as easy as introducing the term "car" with a toy automobile or using a map to start a conversation about locations. Realia promotes engagement, making learning enjoyable and memorable, in addition to improving vocabulary and concept grasp (Heaton, 1999).

## **2.7. The Advantages of Realia in EFL Classes**

Researchers emphasised the primary advantages of employing realia, which have many beneficial consequences in EFL lessons.

### **2.7.1. Amplify Learners' Motivation Positively**

Atrika (2021) mentions that through incorporating realia into EFL classes, learners are more likely to feel motivated and engaged as they can see the practical applications of the language they are learning. This can lead to increased enthusiasm and a deeper sense of purpose in their language acquisition journey. Moreover, the use of realia can also enhance students' overall language proficiency by providing them with opportunities to practice and apply their skills in real-life situations. Realia in EFL classes can also enhance students' motivation by making the learning process more enjoyable and interactive, as they get to physically interact with authentic materials. encourages active participation and collaboration among students, fostering a sense of community and mutual support in the language learning process (Bjork, 2001).

### **2.7.2 Supplying Real Cultural Information about The Target Language Culture**

Bala states that (2015) supplying real cultural information about the target language culture by using realia in EFL classes, students can gain a deeper understanding of the target language culture. Realia provides authentic and tangible examples of cultural artifacts, such as *food, clothing, or everyday objects*, which can help students connect with the culture on a more personal level. This exposure to real cultural information not only enriches their language-learning experience but also promotes cultural sensitivity and intercultural competence. However, incorporating reality into lessons can foster a sense of curiosity and exploration among learners. By incorporating realia, teachers can provide students with valuable insights into the target language culture, allowing them to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for the language they are learning. This can enhance their language skills and overall learning experience (Bala, 2015).

### **2.7.3. Meeting Students' Learning Need**

Lopez claims that (2022) meeting students' learning needs involves adapting teaching methods and materials to cater to individual strengths, weaknesses, and interests. By understanding each student's unique learning style and preferences, educators can create personalized lessons that engage and motivate them, leading to better retention and progress in language acquisition. Furthermore, regularly assessing students' progress allows teachers to identify areas for improvement and provide targeted support, ensuring that their learning needs are consistently met throughout their language learning journey (Sinha, 2022). Bringing an imaginative approach to teaching." Bringing an imaginative approach to teaching not only captures students' attention but also encourages creativity and critical thinking skills. By incorporating activities such as role-plays, simulations, and project-based learning, educators can create a dynamic and interactive classroom environment that enhances language acquisition. This approach allows students to apply their language skills in real-life situations, making the learning process more meaningful and enjoyable. moreover, it helps develop their problem-solving abilities and prepares them for future challenges they may encounter in the real world (Lopez, 2022).

#### **2.7. 4. Promoting Active Engagement and Participation among Students**

promoting active engagement and participation among students as well as fostering a deeper understanding and retention of language concepts. Through incorporating real-life objects, visuals, and scenarios into the classroom, students can connect language learning to their own experiences and interests. This not only enhances their motivation and enthusiasm for learning but also improves their overall language proficiency and fluency. Moreover, the use of realia encourages critical thinking skills as students analyze and interpret authentic materials (Sinha, 2022). providing a more authentic and immersive learning experience. Realia, such as *maps, menus, and objects*, help students understand the context and culture of the language they are learning.

#### **2.7.5. Exposing Students to Language through Authentic Materials**

Exposing students to language through authentic materials, such as *newspapers, magazines, and movies*, not only helps them develop their listening and reading skills but also exposes them to real-life language usage. This can improve their ability to understand and communicate in real-world situations, making their language learning more practical and effective (Lepoz, et al, 2021).

#### **2.8. Challenges of Using Realia in English as a Foreign Language**

Realia, authentic real-world materials, enhances language learning by providing students with tangible examples of language usage. However, challenges include sourcing materials, ensuring relevance to the curriculum, and effectively integrating them into lesson plans to maximize their educational value (Artika, 2018). Students' unfamiliarity with realia in a foreign language poses a challenge when teaching English as a second language. Since realia depicts genuine language use in everyday situations, students might find it difficult to comprehend the subtle cultural allusions or references included in the materials. This may make it more difficult for them to understand the language being presented and its intended meaning. To make realia more relatable and meaningful for language learners, teachers must also carefully choose and modify them to match the cultural backgrounds and experiences of their students (Yilmaz, 2011).

## Section Three

### 3. Experience and Reflection

In the dynamic field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, educators are constantly seeking novel and engaging methods to enhance student learning. Realia, encompassing tangible objects from the real world, has garnered significant interest as a valuable tool in EFL classrooms.

This study explores the effectiveness of realia by examining how it can improve vocabulary memory, promote cultural awareness, and boost student engagement and motivation, among numerous other benefits.

Our experience with realia started in primary school, some teachers supplemented science and social studies lessons with realities. Teachers brought plant seeds and pots into the classroom, where they placed them in the center while teaching a lesson about plant growth. Inspired by the plant she gave us; we planted our seeds and took them to class. While in social studies teacher used to show the class a map and explain each country in detail. Understanding geography, spatial awareness, and cultural interests are all improved by visually seeing maps and globes. Realia-based lessons enhance learning as teachers provide detailed descriptions of plants, increasing attention and enjoyment. Moreover, language teachers, including Arabic and English teachers, used flashcards, pictures, toy cars, numbers, and clothing to teach vocabulary, prepositions, and fashion-related vocabulary.

Furthermore, when we were freshers, lecturers used real-world materials such as films and videos to teach listening and speaking skills to ensure effective communication both in and out of the classroom. The teacher facilitated critical thinking through a film and encouraged students to write reviews and acquire new vocabulary through attentive analysis. In addition, the teacher gave us different scenarios to practice speaking and listening in English while learning conversations. These may include making a telephone call or placing an order at a restaurant by using the English language in practical contexts.

Another example of using Realia was when our teacher in the speaking module asked us to bring pictures of our families so we could describe our family members and acquire new vocabulary and expressions. It was the most effective way to introduce the students to each other, even though none

of us knew each other very well. By participating in this type of activity we have improved our communication skills.

On top of that, during the course of the advance speaking module in our second year of college, our teacher took us to the museum, where we learnt about the customs, history, and culture of the area. The names of the museum's exhibits, including the Word statue and other coins, were also taught to us. We also learned about introducing our tradition of living by visiting the well-known Arbil castle on that particular day. and the richness of our cultural heritage sparked us to learn about communication and interaction in the real world, involvement in the community, and using the English language outside of the classroom. Furthermore, there were numerous instances of realia such as *everyday household items, clothing, tools, communication devices, and even military equipment*. More significantly, students were actively involved in the learning process and had an unforgettable experience.

Management and observation module, where we visited several classrooms to observe teachers teaching. teachers used different teaching methods. A teacher taught her fourth-class students the names of animals using animal toys, and the students learned to recognize the names by listening to the animals' sounds. After class, he showed a video of animals in the zoo. After watching the video, the teacher asked students to discuss with their classmates which animal was their favorite and why.

our experience using realia in EFL classes has been overwhelmingly positive. It has served as a valuable tool that transcends traditional textbook learning, fostering a deeper understanding of the language and the target culture. Through bringing real-world objects and experiences into the classroom, realia bridges the gap between abstract concepts and practical application, making learning more engaging and relatable for students. For instance, using everyday items like *fruits, vegetables, or clothing* during vocabulary lessons allows students not only to learn the names of these objects but also to practice their pronunciation and sentence formation in a context that is relevant and memorable. Moreover, In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the impacts of realia on individual learners become increasingly evident, and crucial for educational institutions to take into careful consideration the unique learning preferences of each student to improve learning progress. realia can extend beyond physical objects. Incorporating cultural artifacts, music, or even local recipes can

provide a deeper understanding of the cultural nuances associated with the language, enriching the learning experience and fostering a sense of global citizenship in students.

While there are undeniable challenges, such as finding appropriate materials and ensuring cultural sensitivity, the potential benefits of using realia in EFL classes far outweigh them. By carefully considering these challenges and implementing realia strategically, educators can create a dynamic and engaging learning environment that empowers students to develop a well-rounded understanding of the language.



## Section Four

### 4. Conclusion

Based on the literary data used in this study as well as the researchers' reflections and experiences, the following conclusions can be made: Traditional teaching tools, like course books and activity books, lack variety and fail to meet global student demands. Educators must learn new strategies to engage students.

Realia can be a powerful tool for enhancing EFL instruction. Using realia to teach effectively means selecting objects that are directly relevant to the subject matter and letting students engage with them. Learning will be more engaging and understanding will be reinforced if realia are connected to the course subject, and has the power to turn learning from abstract ideas into interesting experiences that inspire students in a variety of ways. Tangible objects that symbolize concepts from the actual world—can greatly improve student learning in EFL lessons. Instructional materials give words and concepts a physical expression, which might enhance vocabulary growth and comprehension. This can strengthen comprehension and increase the effectiveness of picking up new words. By bringing some freshness and excitement into the classroom, Real objects can also increase motivation and engagement while making learning more pleasurable for the students.

As a result of these findings, according to our experiences using real objects as teaching aids can help students learn a foreign language more quickly and give them the chance to experience real-world scenarios in a classroom setting. As well as real-world items can help students make real connections between what they are learning in the classroom and their surroundings. Visual and kinesthetic learners especially benefit from this hands-on approach. Another benefit is that Realia adds some fun and novelty to the courses, piques students' interest, and motivates them to learn more about the subject. Furthermore, Real objects can also help students strengthen their critical thinking and communication skills by sparking discussions, pushing them to examine and explain objects, and giving them chances to practice speaking in the target language in context.

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