

**THE USE OF AUTHENTIC MATERIALS THROUGH ‘CRITICAL
FRIENDS GROUP’ AS PART OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR
EFL INSTRUCTORS**

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ABSTRACT

THE USE OF AUTHENTIC MATERIALS THROUGH ‘CRITICAL FRIENDS GROUP’ AS PART OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR EFL INSTRUCTORS

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The purpose of this research study was to investigate the use of authentic materials through Critical Friends Groups (CFG) in a language preparatory program, at a foundation university (non-profit, private) in İzmir, Turkey. Specifically, the study attempted to identify the perceptions and observed behaviours of native and non-native EFL instructors on the use of authentic materials, find out the potential reasons behind the implementation of authentic materials in their classroom practices and finally, examine the influence of incorporating authentic materials through CFG on classrooms practices as well as teachers’ professional development. The participants were 4 EFL instructors offering English courses in the exiting preparatory program. Data were collected through interviews, lesson observations and reflective essays. The findings revealed that participating in CFG has transformational impact on instructors regarding their classroom practices as well as on their professional development.

Keywords: Critical Friends Group (CFG), Authentic Materials, Instructors’ Perceptions, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Professional Development

ÖZ

OTANTİK (ÖZGÜN) MATERYALLERİN ÖĞRETMENLERİN PROFESYONEL GELİŞİMİNİN BİR PARÇASI OLARAK KRİTİK ARKADAŞ GRUBU (CFG) ARACILIĞIYLA KULLANIMI

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Bu çalışmanın amacı İzmir, Türkiye’de bir vakıf üniversitesinin (kar amacı gütmeyen, özel) hazırlık sınıfı programında, Kritik (Eleştirel) Arkadaş Grubu aracılığıyla otantik materyallerin kullanımını araştırmaktır. Özellikle, ana dili İngilizce olan ve olmayan öğretmenlerin özgün materyallerin kullanımına dair algıları ve gözlemlenen davranışlarını tespit etmek, otantik materyalleri uygulamalarının ardında yatan sebepleri ortaya çıkarmak, ve son olarak Kritik (Eleştirel) Arkadaş Grubunda yer almanın öğretmenlerin otantik materyal kullanımına ve mesleki gelişimlerine etkisini incelemektir. Bu çalışmaya İzmir, Türkiye’de bir vakıf üniversitesinde (çalışan, İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğreten 4 okutman katılmıştır. Düzenlenmiştir. Veriler; görüşmeler, ders gözlemleri ve yansıtıcı metinler aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Bulgular, Kritik (Eleştirel) Arkadaş Grubu’nun eğitimcilerin öğretme deneyimleri ve profesyonel gelişimlerine ilişkin dönüşümsel etkileri bulunduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kritik (Eleştirel) Arkadaş Grubu, Otantik Materyal, Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Öğreten Öğretmenlerin Algıları, Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Öğretimi, Mesleki Gelişim



To my family

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ETHICAL CONDUCT	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
ÖZ	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	viii
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Statement of the Problem	2
1.2 Purpose of the Study	2
1.3 Research Questions	3
1.4 Significance of the Study	3
1.5 Definitions.....	4
Chapter 2: Literature Review	5
2.1 Introduction	5
2.2 Critical Friends Group (CFG	5
2.2.1 CFG Model.....	5
2.2.2 Establishing CFG).....	6
2.2.3 Roles of CFG	7
2.2.4 Advantages of CFG	8
2.2.5 CFG and Desired Outcomes	9
2.2.6 Studies on CFG	10
2.3 Use of Authentic Materials in Language Classrooms.....	12

2.4 Studies on the Use of Authentic Materials in Language Classrooms: From the Perspectives of Students and Teachers	14
2.5 Challenges with Authentic Materials	17
Chapter 3: Methodology	19
3.1 Research Design	19
3.2 Universe and Participants	20
3.3 Implementation of CFG.....	21
3.4 Procedures	22
3.4.1 Types of Sampling	23
3.4.2 Sources of Data	23
3.4.2.1 Interviews	23
3.4.2.1.1 Structured Interview.....	24
3.4.2.1.2 Semi-structured Interviews	25
3.4.2.2. Classroom Observations.....	24
3.4.2.3 Reflective Essays	25
3.4.3 Data Analysis Procedures	26
3.5 Trustworthiness	26
3.6 Limitations	27
Chapter 4: Results	28
4.1 Results Related to the Perceptions and Observed Behaviours of EFL Instructors about the Use of Authentic Materials in their Classroom.....	30
4.2 Results Related to the Potential Reasons Behind Implementation of Authentic Materials in Language Classrooms	31
4.3 Findings Related to the Impact of CFG on the Use of Authentic Materials in EFL	33
4.4 Findings Related to the Impact of CFG on EFL Instructors' Professional Development	35
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion	37
5.1 Discussion of Findings for Research Questions.....	37

5.1.1 Discussion about EFL Instructors' Perceptions and Observed Behaviours about the use of Authentic Materials in their classroom practices	37
5.1.2 Discussion about the Reasons for the use of Authentic Materials in EFL Instructors' Classroom Practices	39
5.1.3 Discussion about the Impact of CFG on the Use of Authentic Materials in Language Classrooms	39
5.1.4 Discussion about the Reflections about EFL Instructors about the Impact of CFG on their Professional Development.....	40
5.2 Conclusions	41
5.3 Recommendations	42
REFERENCES.....	43
APPENDICES	46
A. Observation Checklist	46
B. Reflective Essay Template	47
C. CFG Meeting Log	48
D. Interview Questions.....	49

LIST OF TABLES

TABLES

Table 1 Focus of each CFG Meeting	20
Table 2 Overview of Research Questions and Corresponding Procedures.....	25
Table 3 Responses of the Participants to each Question during the Interviews	28
Table 4 Results from the pre-CFG Lesson Observations.....	31
Table 5 Comparison of pre-CFG and post-CFG Lesson Observations.....	33

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURES

Figure 1: CFG and Transformation.	6
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ELT	English Language Teaching
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
CFG	Critical Friends Group
AM	Authentic Material



Chapter 1

Introduction

In the last few decades, much emphasis has been given to the use of authentic materials in EFL classes since they are considered important tools in language learning and teaching (Peacock, 1997; Berardo, 2006; Kılıçkaya, 2004 et al.). Authentic materials come with many advantages when used effectively, some of which are gaining cultural information, presentation of real language and participation from students. In addition, they help students deal with the real and spontaneous language that they face outside the classroom since they consist of real actions and real written language in different situations with different purposes. Using such materials, students are encouraged to explore the language themselves and learn from the exposure they receive. This leads to more motivation among students and help teachers make learning more effective and meaningful. Although authentic materials prove to have many advantages in the process of language learning and teaching, it is sometimes challenging for teachers to adapt them into their lessons.

At this point, Critical Friends Group (CFG), as a form of training and professional development, may aid teachers in the process of adapting and using authentic materials more effectively in the classroom. CFG, which is a registered trademark of the NSRF® (National School Reform Faculty) organization, consists of 5-12 members whose aim is to improve their practice through collaborative learning and structured interactions. It is effective for teachers to help other teachers to discover and improve more about their own teaching and student learning. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the overall perceptions of EFL instructors (both native and non-native) about using authentic materials in their classroom. Besides, the study attempts to examine if participation in CFG has any influence on the effectiveness of implementing authentic materials in language classrooms. Finally, the last goal of this study is to reveal their reflections of the EFL instructors about the impact of CFG on their professional development.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Professional development is a significant element for teachers who want to improve themselves and keep up with the latest changes in the field of education. To meet this need, many forms of professional development programs have been

developed and Critical Friend Groups (CFG) stands out with its aim to provide professional development that leads to enhanced student learning. Although more institutions and professionals now create Critical Friend Groups to improve themselves, there needs to be more research on creating CFG especially in Turkish context.

Studies reveal the following two main points regarding professional development opportunities in Turkey: Existing PD opportunities are not considered applicable in instructors' teaching practices and the satisfaction of Turkish teachers with professional development activities is low (Çelik, Bayraktar-Çepni, & İlyas, 2013; Celik, Mačianskienė, & Aytin, 2013; Ozdemir, 2013; Yurtsever, 2013). These findings might suggest that existing professional growth opportunities may be failing to meet EFL instructors' needs and expectations. Therefore, needs of teachers should be taken into consideration, and teachers should have be given the opportunity to feel free in creating their own developmental steps in a more relaxed environment.

Based on these overviews, Critical Friends Group (CFG) model can be used to promote more motivation among instructors so that they can have a say in the issues that they want to explore, the people that they can work with, how they can reach their goals, in what ways they can reflect on themselves to improve their teaching.

Besides, the CFG method is commonly applied with authentic materials due to their common practice. Their linguistic and non-linguistic benefits, including their rich and interesting content, make them an indispensable part of teaching. However, it is also argued that their complexity might demotivate the students and make it difficult for teachers to implement them in the classroom (Guariento & Morley, 2001; Kilickaya, 2004; Al Azri & Al Rashdi, 2014).

In this study, therefore, the researcher has decided that CFG can serve as a new form of professional development to help EFL instructors explore the use of authentic materials in a more detailed way and motivate them to improve themselves professionally.

1.2 Purpose

In line with the previous research, the present study aims to investigate the use of authentic materials through CFG in EFL language classrooms. Specifically, the study attempts to identify the perceptions and observed behaviours of native and non-native EFL instructors on the use of authentic materials; find out the potential reasons behind the implementation of authentic materials in their

classroom practices and finally, examine the impact of incorporating authentic materials through CFG on EFL instructors' classrooms practices as well as their professional development.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What are the perceptions and observed behaviours of native and non-native instructors about the use of authentic materials in EFL classrooms?
2. What are the potential reasons behind implementing authentic materials in EFL classrooms?
3. Does CFG have any influence on the incorporation of authentic materials in the classroom practices of the participating instructors? If yes, in what aspects does it make change?
4. Does CFG have any impact on the professional development of the participants? If yes, in what aspects does CFG contribute to this process?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The present study is based on two main ideas. The first one is that for the best student outcomes, teachers need to engage in continuous professional development. (Vo & Nguyen, 2010). Secondly, as suggested by Kılıçkaya (2004) language presented to the learners in the class should be authentic because it enhances the learning process. The emphasis on textbooks and lack of authentic materials used in EFL classrooms bring about the need to raise more awareness on authentic material use. Therefore, there is a need for training for instructors to be more aware of what can be done with authentic materials. To this end, present study aims to integrate CFG as a form of training program/professional development for instructors to use authentic materials more effectively.

1.5 Operational Definitions of Terms

In this part, the terms used throughout the study is defined briefly.

Authentic Material: Spoken or written language data produced in the course of genuine communication and not specifically written for purposes of language teaching (Nunan, 1999).

Critical Friends Groups: CFG is a registered trademark of the NSRF® (National School Reform Faculty) organization that consists of 5-12 members whose aim is to improve their practice through collaborative learning and structured

interactions.

EFL: English as a foreign language refers to the teaching of English to people for whom it is not the first language (Online Oxford Dictionary, 2016).

Teacher Professional Development: Systematic efforts to bring about change in the classroom practices of teachers, in their attitudes and beliefs, and in the learning outcomes of student (Guskey, 2002).



Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The literature review of this study starts with background information on Critical Friends Groups (CFG) and use of authentic materials. Then, the notions authentic material and CFG are touched upon and explained in detail. Finally, related studies and beliefs regarding two notions along with their classroom implementation are summarized.

2.2 Critical Friends Groups (CFG)

In order for teachers to get the best outcome from the classroom, it is necessary that they are engaged in activities to aid with their professional development. To fill in this concern, many models of teacher professional development and training programs have been developed in the last few decades.

One of the models to enhance professional interactions is the idea of Critical Friends Group (CFG). The Annenberg Institute originally developed the term CFG for School Reform at Brown University in 1994 for improving collegial dialogue amongst K-12 teachers and administrators. The protocol has been adapted to higher educations as well as community based and non-profit organizations since then. The National School Reform Faculty at the Harmony Education Centre in Bloomington, Indiana has been providing the training for Critical Friends Groups since 2000. The following section will provide more details about the CFG model, its establishment, roles along with the advantages of using it for teacher professional development.

2.2.1 CFG model. Continuous professional development is of significant importance for teachers to improve themselves and their practices. Teachers who take part in such activities continue learning throughout their careers and make changes if necessary. A regular process of self-analysis, inquiry and self-reflection is an indispensable part of improving as a teacher. This improvement can be accomplished by CFG, which can be regarded as a formal and ongoing interaction of groups of teachers participating voluntarily.

In one of the most recent studies, Peterson-Veatch (2007) offers the following chart, which shows the CFG model and outcomes:

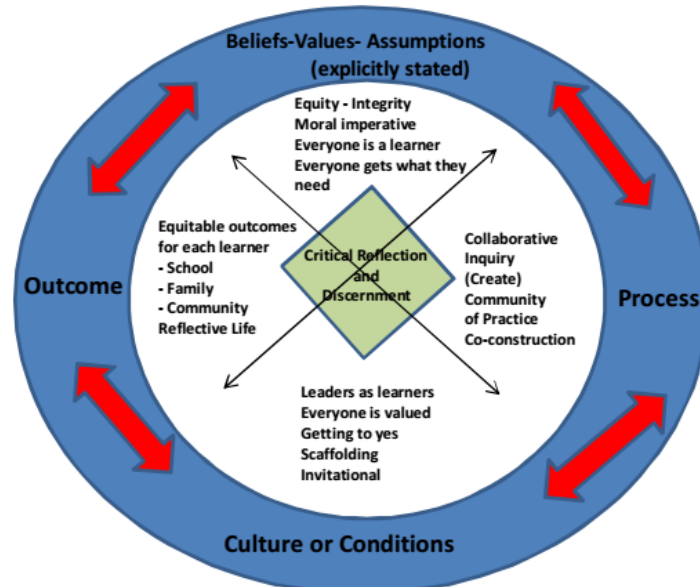


Figure 1: CFG and transformation (Adapted form Peterson-Veatch, 2007)

As shown in the figure above, CFG model enables teachers to question their practices as a group by teamwork and partnership. It also creates an environment where teachers can share their beliefs with fair treatment from all members of the CFG. Learning together in such collaborative environment helps them improve their teaching practices, deepen their knowledge and build a shared understanding of critical issues in teaching.

In brief, CFG is an ongoing process that contains elements of collaboration, equity, questioning feedback and most importantly reflection that will provide teachers to learn from each other.

2.2.2 Establishing CFG. According to NSRF® organization, a Critical Friends Group is a professional learning community that consists of 5 to 12 educators who come together voluntarily at least once a month. The purpose of a CFG is to provide professional development that translates into improved student learning. This adult learning is accomplished through formal, ongoing interactions of small groups of staff that participate voluntarily. A trained CFG coach, who is often a member of the faculty, leads the CFG. If these groups are engaging and effective, they increase student learning, contribute to the participants’ professional growth, and improve quality of education in the learning community.

Cox (2010) puts forward some attributes that educators should possess to create a CFG that can work well. One of these attributes is demonstrating a commitment to professional activities, meaning that the participants should be interested in improving

themselves through following new publications and journals, conferences, and even writing for the profession. Another important feature that the teachers should have is collaborating actively with other teachers. As a CFG is made up of 5-12 teachers, one should be able to provide an environment of trust and be able to give and receive feedback effectively. In addition, teachers should also be able to stay away from controversy and find ways to mediate and solve problems in collaborating. Finally, teachers participating in CFG should be passionate about providing positive, motivating learning experience.

2.2.3 Roles of CFG. In CFG, members of the group take on different roles, which are facilitator, presenter and discussants/ responders. To begin with, the facilitator is responsible for planning the protocol and focusing question prior to the meeting and ensuring that the protocol is followed. S/he also monitors the conversation to ensure that it is shared by everyone and invites comments from all participants to encourage multiple perspectives. If needed, s/he also redirects the conversation. Finally, s/he sets time limits and keeps time carefully.

In addition, the presenter decides together with the facilitator on an appropriate protocol and the framing in addition to raising a perplexing question or reflecting on a dilemma. S/he also listens and takes notes on responders' comments and comments at an appropriate time as well.

The responders, or discussants, discuss the work in-depth. They follow the protocol, pose questions and give feedback that is both warm- positive and cool-critical. It is important that the feedback be given in a supportive tone and that discussants provide practical suggestions.

The CFG meetings follow a certain procedure. Costantino (2010) briefly explains the protocol of CFG in six steps (p. 3). Firstly, it starts with an overview in which the facilitator describes the focus of the session. The presenter, who is different from the facilitator, present the issue and explains what questions or concerns should focus the feedback. In the next stage, participants have the opportunity to ask questions to the presenter. Then, while the presenter remains silent, listening and taking notes, the issue is discussed. Next, the presenter reflects on the feedback. Finally, the facilitator debriefs the session. Overall, a session in CFG lasts 35-40 minutes. In the

end, participants are encouraged to give positive or “warm” feedback and constructively critical or “cool” feedback that is focused on the tuning questions.

To summarize, there are three main roles in CFG, which are the facilitator, the presenter and the discussants, and each role plays an important part to have effective meetings. Following these roles help to avoid any complications and improve the outcomes of the CFG meetings.

2.2.4 Advantages of CFG. CFG encourages teachers to examine their instructional experiences, share what they know and see, their doubts and questions and the areas that they want to improve themselves. Moreover, it also aims to build an environment of trust and creativity. This type of professional development can be regarded effective for building teacher knowledge.

Fahey (2011) defines CFG as a rigorous learning experience, in which teachers learn to work collaboratively and makes collective reflection (p. 32). CFG encourages teachers to learn to work collaboratively, examine student or teacher work, and discover about student learning and teaching practices. As colleagues, CFG members help each other make choices on how to introduce concepts, uncover evidence that students are demonstrating growth, or have mastered a concept, rule, or strategy (Silva, 2003). A Critical Friends Group can, therefore, be seen as a strategy to enhance professional interaction among colleagues, which now more and more schools and organizations seem to adapt.

Furthermore, Critical Friends Groups are designed to create professional learning communities, make teaching practices explicit through dialogue, and establish a foundation for sustained professional development based on inquiry. They also provide a context to understand educators work with students, relationships with peers, and beliefs about teaching and learning (Dunne, Nave & Lewis, 2000). Through the social interaction of discussion, active learning evolves, and each participant interprets, transforms, and internalizes new knowledge as a result of collective thinking. Within the CFG framework, such collaborative discussions allow individual teachers to develop their own perspectives and to model strengths for others (Vo & Nguyen, 2010).

To wrap it up, teachers in Critical Friends Groups believe they can affect student achievement and these teachers have higher expectations for student learning, which,

in turn, leads to greater student achievement. When teachers are in an environment where they feel comfortable, it is more likely that there will be more sharing. This will help them to understand and explore a problem they encounter and be more satisfied with themselves and their practices.

2.2.5 CFG and Desired Outcomes. CFG aims to provide a structured collaboration experience to educators of all levels that will focus on individual, collegial, and organizational improvement of a 21st century teachers practice. (Miller, 2012, p.2) Another objective of CFG is to provide teachers an environment in which they can do self-assessment and develop further expertise in essential elements in teaching. It also promotes 21st Century Educators to develop and lead staff development based on their professional strengths and interests. Last but not the least, it aims to develop a learning community that teachers model, share, coach and reflect upon available research, practice in teaching, learning, and leadership.

Overall, CFGs allow teachers to explore complex issues in their classrooms in an environment, which is both collegial and collaborative. They attempt to provide develop a community for teachers' questions, reflections, analysis, feedback, and learning, which, in return, aid with the improvement of student achievement.

2.3. Studies on CFG

As previously mentioned, CFG is a professional learning community which consists of a small group of educators coming together voluntarily and regularly to have structured professional conversations about their work. Different studies have been carried out to investigate the effectiveness of participating in CFG on professional development in the fields of education and even business (Franzak, 2002, Key, 2006, Tolivar, 2005; Fahey, 2011, Kersey 2014). This part of the thesis highlights some studies that focus on CFG participation in terms of collaboration, professionalism, and improving teacher and student learning. Since there are now more institutions and professional choosing to take part in CFG, there has been some studies examining how Critical Friends Groups contribute to professionals and their reflections on taking part in such an experience.

To begin with, an interpretive case study was conducted by Franzak (2002) to explore the impact of CFG participation on the professional identity of a student teacher. Data were collected from various tools including reflective writings, lesson

plans, and portfolio and e-mail communications. While the participants reported to have increasing confidence and growing independence along with more commitment to her profession, the researcher concluded that CFG was effective in enhancing the participant's conception of the profession. Through this study, it was suggested that teacher education programs such as CFG might support the student teaching experience by providing access to authentic professional development experience.

Tolivar (2005), who has been a CFG coach since 2003, advocates that educators taking part in CFG tend to say that their experience in CFG was "profound, inspiring, deep, collaborative, exciting, rewarding, insightful, and safe". Moreover, she adds by quoting the people who took part in such experience: "I have grown as a person, a human being, and a professional in just five days" and "This was a professionally and personally renewing experience for me." As a result, it is suggested that CFG, if engaging and effective, increase student learning and contribute to the participants' professional growth.

According to Key (2006), who has done a review of research on the impact of CFG, research reveals four main claims about the effectiveness of CFG. Firstly, CFG fosters a culture of community and collaboration. By working together regularly, they create an atmosphere where they can share opinions and learn from each other. Another impact is that encouraging teachers to figure out their needs and look for ways to meet them enhance teacher professionalism. In addition, CFG has the potential to change teachers' thinking and practice. It does not only help teachers to look at the puzzle issues from a new point of view, but also help change their practices from a teacher-centred instruction to a more student-centred one. Finally, CFG have the potential to affect student learning. Since teachers focus on addressing the needs of the students throughout the process of CFG, the results they get from participating in such a group also has an impact on understanding the learners and help create better learners.

Similarly, in Kelley's (2007) study, the majority of the participants felt the activities in the training reflected this goal and a big majority felt that a positive learning environment was created for them to explore their new learning. A high number of participants were already incorporating the concepts into their daily practice. They claimed to have enjoyed the protocol and stated that CFG helped them

to listen to other people's views of the same dilemma and gave them a different point of view to look at problematic issues. Others also mentioned the effectiveness of working in a team improved themselves and helped them change the way they work.

Another case of CFG was investigated in the case study conducted by Fahey (2011) as a means of supporting leadership learning. The sample population was school leaders who came together over the course of 6 years to examine the dilemmas of leadership, analyze student work as well as learn together. According to the obtained findings, the participants, the school leaders, became more collaborative and reflective on their work and they became more open to give and receive feedback in order to share their practices.

In a research by Constantino (2011), the results and comments revealed that the CF protocol was significant for creating an environment that was both supportive and positively critical. In other words, students emphasized how much they learned from others. Another key finding was the value of informal peer dialogue that the CFG developed even outside the CF discussions. The participants reported less isolated feelings as well as they felt more support from the other participants in the CFG.

In another CFG case, a teacher candidate, mentor teacher, and university teacher educator took part in Critical Friends Groups to explore whether and how Critical Friends Groups could support professional development. The results showed that participating in CFG was not only helpful for novices but also for experienced teachers and teacher educators to examine teacher and student work by engaging in inquiry-oriented and professional conversation. Through this study, it was suggested that Critical Friends Groups supported both pre-service and practicing teachers' professional learning. In addition, CFG helped undergraduate students begin to engage in professional conversation as well as strengthening their capacity to describe and analyze student learning. Finally, another benefit of being a part of CFG was learning to engage in the analysis of teacher and student work.

In another study from Turkey, Aytakin (2013) investigated the effects of CFG on teachers' professional development through the transcripts of the meeting, the journals kept and the researcher's notes. The results showed positive attitudes from teachers about their experience in CFG. Specifically, the participants found CFG to be effective because it was an adaptable process where teachers could focus on their

wants and needs. In addition, because of the fact that CFG is an on-going process rather than a one-time experience, teachers could find the chance to concentrate more on what they were doing. Overall, the teachers claimed that CFG contributed to a change in their way of thinking as well as their classroom practices and motivated the participants to share and support their experiences more.

Kersey (2014) examined how participants experienced a professional development program called a Critical Friends Group with the purpose of understanding the process and the learning of the participants in a Critical Friends Groups. The results of the study revealed that there have been professionally significant transformational moments for the educators participating in CFG. Moreover, the participation in a CFG made the participants aware of what changes they personally need in their own educational practice and in their own school community.

Overall, the studies supports the purpose of CFG since it fosters collaboration, enhances professionalism, as well as plays a crucial role in changing teacher practices, which might have an impact on student learning, and in aiding with their professional development. Based on the findings obtained from these studies, CFG is perceived as a significant movement in the field of education to improve student learning through teacher collaboration. In this growing trend, where teachers take the responsibility for their own learning, teachers use structured protocols and explore their teaching strategies, conduct observations, analyze their students' along with their own' growth. This participation leads to greater reflection about teaching practice, which supports change in practices and improves student achievement.

2.3 Use of Authentic Materials in Language Classrooms

Using authentic materials in ESL/EFL classes have been discussed for many years and the definitions of authentic material are slightly different in literature (Nunan, 1999; Rogers & Medley, 1988; Bacon & Finneman, 1990; Richards& Schmidt, 2002; Gilmore, 2007, Tennant, 2011).

To begin with, a definition of an authentic material by Nunan (1999) simply consists of many other definitions made by linguists: spoken or written language data produced in the course of genuine communication and not specifically written for purposes of language teaching. In other words, authentic materials are the type of

materials that are different from those in textbooks since they are not originally developed for pedagogical purposes. According to Rogers and Medley (1988) they are the samples that reflect a naturalness of form and an appropriateness of cultural and situational context that would be found in the language as used by native speakers. In addition, Bacon and Finnemann (1990) define authentic materials as texts produced by native speakers for a non-pedagogical purpose. For Richards and Schmidt (2002) it indicates the degree to which materials have the natural speech or writing qualities. Gilmore (2007) defines authenticity as the language produced but a real speaker/writer for a real audience, conveying a real message. Finally, in Tennant's (2011) definition, the word authentic refers to anything that is originally produced for a non-classroom audience.

Many researchers interested in authentic materials highlighted the benefits of using them, in second/foreign language learning education and suggest that authentic materials have a positive impact on learners' levels of on-task behaviour, concentration, and involvement in the target activity more than artificial material. This is not necessarily because the material itself is interesting but due to the fact that such materials are natural and realistic sources (Peacock, 1997; Nunan, 1999; Linder, 2000; Kılıçkaya, 2004; Mishan, 2005; Berardo, 2007; Kapur, 2001; Şaraplı, 2011).

Nunan (1999), for example, believes that such materials provide a more natural environment that encourages students to be better readers and listeners. According to him, exposing learners to authentic materials is indispensable because authentic materials provide rich input for learners. When exposed to such language forms, inside or outside the classroom, students will better be able them to cope with genuine interaction.

According to Linder (2000), authentic materials have a significant place in a lesson. When used as realia, they are complementary to the lesson content and when used as texts or in spoken language, they serve as rich sources for exposing students to real life language, becoming the central focus of a lesson. In addition, authentic materials can serve as input tasks as well as output tasks when focusing on language practices including vocab grammatical structures and pronunciation.

Furthermore, Kılıçkaya (2004) advocates that language presented to the learners in the class should be authentic because it enhances the learning process. Materials

such as magazines, newspaper, songs contain more realistic and natural examples of language than those in textbooks enabling students to deal with real language and content. Therefore, learners feel that they are learning the target language as it is used outside the classroom. For this reason, instructors should be able to use authentic materials that has a communicative and social purpose and therefore can arouse interest amongst students.

According to Mishan (2005), authentic materials enhances not only the learners' understanding of the language but also the society and the culture of where the language is spoken. This has the potential of motivating students and making them interested in the material. Similarly, Berardo (2006) states that materials support a more creative approach to teaching and inform students about the real world.

For Gilmore (2007), authentic materials also create a stress free environment, and increase the learners' motivation if they are interesting, facilitate active learning and lead to increases student engagement. In a similar fashion, according to Kapur (2011) and Şaraplı (2011), using authentic materials help students produce better and more natural language that which are beneficial for learners' motivation and participation when the tasks are suitable and well planned.

To summarize, the arguments regarding authentic texts in language learning all lead to one very significant point: that their use enhances second/foreign language learning and teaching process. Since authentic materials provide rich and varied comprehensible input for language learners, they expose learners to language serving a useful purpose. Thus, they connect the learners to the world outside the classroom. Moreover, they provide a refreshing change from the textbook; provide information about a wide range of topics. Finally, authentic texts also have an impact on affective factors essential to learning, such as motivation, empathy and emotional involvement.

2.4. Studies on the use of Authentic Materials in Language Classrooms: From the Perspectives of Students and Teachers

Numerous studies have been carried out in literature regarding authentic materials regarding their effectiveness in language teaching and learning. There is satisfactory evidence that authentic materials are of great help during this process in many ways. This part of the thesis highlights some studies that focus on authentic materials from both teacher and learner perspectives in terms of attitude, motivation

and competence (Ghaderpanahi, 2012; Abdulhusseyin, 2014, Omid & Azam, 2015, Belaid & Murray, 2015).

To begin with, in a study by Abdulhusseyin (2014), he attempted to find teachers' and students' perceptions on the use of authentic materials in language classrooms. Data were collected from third year college students of English and teachers of English through questionnaires that included a series of questions and other prompts. The results revealed a statistically significant difference between the attitudes of teachers and learners. Specifically, learners had stronger positive attitudes than teachers. As a result, the teachers were recommended to incorporate a variety of authentic materials and consider giving learners the opportunity to choose authentic materials of their own choice to incorporate into their classes.

Omid and Azam (2015), with the purpose to explore the attitudes of Iranian English language teachers toward using authentic materials concerning the receptive skills, gave out a questionnaire to 57 high school teachers. The results of the study, regardless of teachers' experience, academic degree, nationality or teaching experience, demonstrated that teachers' attitudes towards using authentic materials in EFL classes were highly positive as they perceived it as an important tool for providing meaningful input. They agreed that implementing authentic materials in their classrooms played a significant role in improving students' receptive skills through exposure to real life language and situations.

Similarly, in a study by Belaid and Murray (2015), investigating the EFL teachers' attitudes and reactions toward using authentic materials in language teaching, fifteen potential EFL teachers filled out a survey about their attitudes and reactions toward using authentic materials in teaching English. The findings revealed that all EFL teachers, despite differences in their teaching experiences and academic degrees, fully advocated the use of authentic materials in their classrooms. The participating teachers stated that through authentic material use, students would be exposed to everyday language which would meet their needs and interests. The obtained results also showed that most preferred materials by the teachers were the Internet and printed materials such as magazines and newspapers. Concerning the level, they mostly preferred to use authentic materials and chose intermediate level of L2 competency.

Finally, the teachers expressed their need for training in using such materials, which are selecting activities and curricula modifications.

In an experimental study, Gilmore (2011) aimed to find out whether authentic materials helped Japanese learners to develop their communicative competence. The reports collected during a 10-month long longitudinal investigation through a listening test, a pronunciation test, a C-test, a grammar test, a vocabulary test, a discourse completion task, an oral interview, and a student-student role-play showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group in five of the eight measures. The analysis of the findings suggested that the authentic materials used and their tasks were more effective in developing a broader range of communicative competencies in learners than the textbook material. Finally, the materials and the associated tasks provided richer input, allowing them to acquire a variety of features of the language.

Furthermore, Ghaderpanahi (2012), with an attempt to examine the influences of authentic aural materials, applied pre- and post- listening comprehension tests to thirty female undergraduate psychology majors studying English as a foreign language. The results from the interviews and questionnaires revealed that the use of authentic materials enhanced EFL students' listening comprehension ability in the EFL classroom. According to the findings, there was significant improvement in the ability of the students in listening. The students seemed to have benefited greatly from the authentic materials they were exposed to as they had much better results in the post-listening comprehension tests.

Finally, Kozhevnikova (2014) worked with 20 intermediate level students to figure out what impact authentic sources have on their cultural awareness and language competence. The materials included as sitcoms and authentic texts from magazines over a period of one semester. The results from semi-structured interviews indicated that majority of the students encountered with authentic materials were highly beneficial for their cultural and linguistic development as well as their motivation towards learning a foreign language in general.

To wrap up, there are various studies conducted in the literature regarding the use of authentic materials in language classrooms. Based on the obtained findings, it can be stated that both teachers' and students' perceptions and attitudes towards the use of authentic materials are positive as they proved to be beneficial both

linguistically and culturally. In this regard, this study aims to explore the perceptions and practices of EFL instructors (both native and non-native) towards using authentic materials in their classrooms by highlighting the importance of participating in CFG and revealing its influence on their classroom practices as well as on their professional development.

2.5 Challenges with Authentic Materials

While there is satisfactory evidence that support the use of authentic materials, it is also claimed that problems are inevitable while using such materials. Studies reveal that aside from the advantages of authentic materials, they often contain language, structures and vocabulary items that might be too complex or difficult to deal with. Thus, authentic materials might cause challenges both for the teachers and the students, especially in lower level classes. (Kılıçkaya, 2004; Berardo, 2006; Tamo, 2009; Baghban&Pandian 2011)

One of the important challenges of using authentic materials is their language, which contains more complex elements than in a textbook. The language in authentic materials are often long and complex. Therefore, students might have hard time dealing with the materials when there is not enough support by the teachers. In addition, the structures and the vocabulary may be irrelevant to the needs of the learners and can create difficulty. This may have a negative impact of the learners' motivation and confidence and create effective filter. (Krashen, 1982)

According to Matsuta (n.d.), the challenges of authentic materials lean more toward the instructor rather than the learner due to the lack of support materials with authentic videos or texts so preparing lessons with authentic sources can be more time consuming than EFL-specific materials. Authentic materials may require special preparation. A lesson with an authentic material needs to be carefully planned so that students can learn from it. From the teachers' perspectives, it can be time consuming to turn the material into something that the students can benefit from. Without sufficient support materials, using authentic materials can add time constraints for the teachers

Another challenge with authentic materials is the fact that they have the culture that they are produced in so it requires a good knowledge of cultural background to understand the authentic material. In addition to the language complexity of the

material, this gap between the cultures and the required background knowledge can make it more difficult for students to comprehend the material.

In brief, the challenges mentioned about authentic materials are complex language structures, unnecessary or irrelevant words, and cultural differences. As long as pedagogical support is provided by the teacher, students will feel more confident and secure when they handle an authentic material. When implementing authentic materials, to overcome the challenges, students' abilities and tasks should be taken into consideration.



Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter aims to describe the methodology of the study and provide information on the research questions, research design, setting, participants, data collection instruments and procedures, data analysis, and limitations of the study.

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What are the perceptions and observed behaviours of native and non-native instructors about the use of authentic materials in EFL classrooms?
2. What are the potential reasons behind implementing authentic materials in EFL classrooms?
3. Does CFG have any influence on the incorporation of authentic materials in the classroom practices of the participating instructors? If yes, in what aspects does it make change?
4. Does CFG have any impact on the professional development of the participants? If yes, in what aspects does CFG contribute to this process?

3.1 Research Design

Qualitative case study was adapted as research design in the present study. A case study is a variation of an ethnography in that the researcher provides an in depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g. an activity, an event, a process, or an individual) based on the extensive data collection (Creswell, 2007) Case study research can take either a qualitative or quantitative approach. In the qualitative approach, case study refers to the in depth analysis of a single a single person, a group of people, an organization or an institution. The aim of case study research is to understand the complexity of a case in depth. Because of this reason, it often requires many methods of gathering data, including observation, interview, and testing. Therefore, case study research can be considered versatile.

There are a number of advantages in using case studies. One of the advantages is, as mentioned above, gathering data from a variety of sources to provide better insight into a case. This enables the researcher to explore and describe the data to explain the complexity of the case, which may not be entirely possible through experimental or survey research. Another advantage is that case studies improve

analytical thinking and communication. A case study is an important way of illustrating theories and can help show how different aspects are related and they can encourage generating new ideas. Moreover, this method is important for a holistic point of view.

The present study employs case study with a qualitative approach in order to obtain in-depth and multi-faceted analysis of CFG experiences of EFL instructors. Qualitative data were provided through different tools including interviews, classroom observations and reflective essays, which are expected to give insight and enable the researcher to explore and explain the use of authentic materials through CFG as well as find its impact on teacher professional development.

3.2 Universe and Participants

In the present study, data were collected from 4 EFL instructors currently employed in the preparatory program. Specifically, two female and two male instructors participated in the study. Their age range is 23-45 with at least 3 years of teaching experience. Two of the instructors were of Turkish nationality while the other two were native English speakers. They all had their majors in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT).

3.3 Implementation of CFG

For the purposes of this study, the researcher first explained CFG in detail to 12 instructors working at English Language Preparatory School of a foundation (non-profit, private) university, including the definition of CFG, its objective, the procedure, and the case study itself. Four instructors (2 native and 2 non-native) agreed to work with the researcher voluntarily throughout the study to discover more about their own teaching and improve student learning.

The instructors participating in CFG had different schedules therefore; based on their convenience the meeting dates were arranged in advance. They came together every two weeks (4 CFG meetings each lasting for 50 min.) to discuss a focus point. CFG meetings were planned by the researcher based on the interview and observation findings. The focus of each week is shown in the table below:

Table 1

Focus of Each CFG Meeting

CFG meeting	Length	Focus
1	50 minutes	Reflection on What Authentic Material is <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • definition of AM • function of AM
2	50 minutes	Selecting Authentic Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • available sources • criteria for choosing AM
3	50 minutes	Adjusting Authentic Materials for the classroom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deciding on tasks • deciding on the level
4	50 minutes	Practical Classroom Activities

Before each meeting, the researcher sent related sources to the participants to inform about the focus of the week and provided an area to discuss during the CFG. Each meeting was recorded and a meeting log was filled out.

The first CFG meeting included an overview of authentic materials including definitions made by researchers over the years and advantages and challenges about implementing such materials. The facilitator, the researcher, asked questions to the participants to guide the discussion. The atmosphere was friendly and creative because all four instructors had the chance to express their opinions. At the end of the meeting, the researcher provided some available sources to the instructors to be discussed in the next meeting.

The second CFG meeting focused on selecting the right authentic materials, available sources and the criteria for choosing such materials. The group was already provided with some sources to explore at prior the meeting, so they commented on the sources and shared their own with their colleagues. In addition, the researcher guided the group to discuss on the criteria should be when choosing an authentic material. It was decided that students' abilities, level, learning styles and interests should be taken into account while choosing an authentic material.

The focus of the third CFG meeting was adjusting materials for the level of students. More specifically, the group came together and discussed how to decide on the level and the tasks that would best meet the learners' needs. To do this, an authentic text was shared with the instructors one day prior to the meeting. During the meeting, the instructors worked in pairs to create a task. One pair worked on a task for lower-levels, and the other worked on a task to be taught to a higher-level class. The tasks prepared were shared and commented by other instructors. Finally, the meeting was concluded with a task for all the instructor, which was to come up with practical ideas for using authentic materials based on the issues mentioned in the first three meetings.

In the last CFG meeting, instructors tried to come up with practical classroom activities that can be easily applied in the lesson with an authentic material. The ideas were expanded through the sharing of ideas and were all written down to be kept.

3.4 Procedures

This section provides detailed information about types of sampling, data collection instruments, data analysis procedures, trustworthiness, and limitations.

3.4.1 Types of sampling. In qualitative inquiry, the intent is not to generalize to a population, but to develop an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon. Thus, to understand this phenomenon, the qualitative researcher purposefully selects individuals (Creswell, 2014). Purposeful sampling, the research term used for qualitative sampling, was used in this particular study. Specifically, in this heterogeneous sample, the instructors were chosen carefully and intentionally to help understand the central phenomenon. Their diverse backgrounds and experience in teaching was taken into consideration when asking the instructors to take part in the project. Another important aspect was that they voluntarily accepted to be a part of CFG.

There are several qualitative sampling strategies and the researcher should identify one that is appropriate for the research purposes and defend its use. (Creswell, 2014) This study applies Theory or Concept Sampling. Theory or Concept Sampling is a purposeful sampling strategy that helps the researcher to generate or discover a theory or specific concepts within the theory.

This study employed Theory or Concept Sampling to gain a closer insight into the perspectives of the EFL instructors on using authentic materials and also, to help generate ideas on the concept of CFG.

3.4.2 Sources of data. In this study, data were obtained through three qualitative sources namely, pre- and post- structured interviews, classroom observations, and reflective essays.

3.4.2.1 Interviews. In qualitative research, interviews the researchers ask participants general, open-ended questions and record their answers. Then, the transcription and typing of data for analysis follows (Creswell, 2014). The type of interview done in this study is one-to-one interview due to the small number of participants (2 native and 2 non-native), where the researcher asked questions to each participant at a time.

The interviews were conducted twice, pre- and post- CFG meetings. Pre-CFG interview (structured) aimed to investigate the perceptions of native and non-native instructors about the use of authentic materials in their classrooms. The attempt of the post-interview (semi-structured) was to reveal whether CFG had any impact on the use of authentic materials by the two participating groups in their classroom practices. Each interview is discussed in the following part in detail.

3.4.2.1.1. Structured Interviews. In structured interviews, the interviewer asked the same series of questions which are created prior to the interview. One major benefit of such interviews is that it provides a clear topical focus and well-developed understanding of the issue.

The questions used in the present study were adapted from a study by Belaid & Murray's (2015) study on *Using Authentic Materials in the Foreign Language Classrooms: Teacher Attitudes and Perceptions in Libyan Universities*. The questions were predetermined with the aim to link the perception to the relevant criteria to be explored. Specifically, four questions were asked to restrict their answers about the overall perceptions of using authentic materials in EFL classrooms. The first question was whether the instructors used any authentic materials and their reasons for doing so. Next, they were asked to explain how they used them in their classes regarding four skills, proficiency level of students, types of preferred sources. They also

commented on the importance of authentic materials. Lastly, they expressed their need training for implementing authentic materials into their lessons.

3.4.2.1.2 Semi-structured Interviews. Semi-structured interviews have a fairly open framework when compared with structured interviews, and this allows for a more focused and conversational communication. In semi-structured interviews, more general questions are asked and most of the questions are created during the interview. This allows the more flexibility for discussing the details. Through such interviews, the researcher can gain a range of insights on the issue and therefore obtain reliable and comparable qualitative data.

As for the post-interview, the participants were asked only one question regarding the impact on their use of authentic materials through CFG. The question forwarded to the instructors was whether CFG had had any influence on their use of authentic materials in language classrooms, and if it had, what it was.

With the use of semi-structured interviews, it was expected that the instructors were given the freedom to express their views and opinions in more detail and in their own terms. Thus, the researcher could also find the opportunity to identify new ways of exploring the impacts of CFG in instructors' practices of authentic materials since the instructors did not provide only answers but also their reasons along with their answers.

3.4.2.2 Classroom observations. Observation is the process of gathering open-ended, first-hand information by observing people and places at a research site (Creswell, 2014). By observation, one can identify a problem by making an in depth analysis of the problems or situations. Observations enable the researcher to describe existing situations using the five senses, providing a "written photograph" of the situation under study (Kawulich, 2005). Therefore, in the present study, classroom observation was used to describe the data in real-life environment and explore the research topic in detail. Specifically, 8 observations were done; before and after the participation of 4 EFL instructors (2 native and 2 non-native) to find out whether CFG had made any difference on their use of authentic materials in language classrooms.

Before the observation, all four instructors were notified about the observation place and time. They were asked to conduct a lesson with the help of an authentic material; however, they were not informed about the checklist items to avoid any

influence. During the observation, a checklist including four items parallel to the interview was used to have a closer look at the classroom practices of the two groups of instructors (native and non-native) in their classroom. The items in the checklist were as follows: type of authentic material used; the skill and/or language focus it is used for; the level of the material (appropriateness) and lastly, other (points need improving). At the end of the observation, the researcher shared her notes with the instructors to confirm the notes of the observer.

3.4.2.3 Reflective essays. A reflective essay aims to bring different perspectives into focus by shedding light on the affective impact on the pragmatic intervention (Glaser, 2014). As the last data collection tool in this study, all four EFL instructors were asked to write a reflective essay after their participation in CFG. They were asked to express their thoughts about taking part in CFG as well as emphasize its impact on their professional development.

The following table provides an overview of the research questions and the

Overview of Research Questions and Corresponding Procedures

Research Question	Data Collection Instruments	Data Analysis
1. What are the perceptions and observed behaviours of native and non-native EFL instructors about the use of authentic materials in EFL classrooms?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured Interviews (Pre-CFG) • Classroom Observation (Pre-CFG) 	Content Analysis
2. What are the potential reasons behind implementing authentic materials in EFL classrooms?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured Interviews (Pre-CFG) 	Content Analysis
3. Does CFG have any influence on the incorporation of authentic materials in the classroom practices of the participating instructors? If yes, in what aspects does it make change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured Interviews (post-CFG) • Classroom Observation, post-CFG 	Content Analysis

4. Does CFG have any impact on the professional development of the participants? If yes, in what aspects does CFG contribute to this process?
- Reflective Essays
 - Content Analysis
-

3.4.3 Data analysis procedures. In this study, the data gathered from interviews, classroom observations and reflective essays were analyzed qualitatively through content analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Due to small number of participants, the data was coded by hand. The process began with the open coding of the data followed by deducing categories and sub-categories from these codes, which were then, gathered under the aspects of implementing authentic materials in EFL classrooms through CFG.

The categories and themes were subject to the checking of inter-raters. To identify the degree of inter-rater reliability, two experts in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) identified themes from the codes. It emerged that the raters achieved close agreement on the general themes apart from the different verbalizations of similar concepts.

3.5 Trustworthiness. According to Guba (1981), there are four criteria that researchers need to establish for a trustworthy study. The four criteria for trustworthiness is establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

Credibility refers to the confidence in the truth of the findings. To establish credibility, triangulation played an important part. The data were gathered from three different tools to get more detailed and balanced results. In addition, using multiple data sources helped to gain better insight to the issue.

Transferability, which is another crucial criterion in a qualitative study, is related to the applicability of the findings in other contexts. In this study,

transferability plays an important role because although there are many studies regarding authentic materials, there is limited research in the area of ELT regarding Critical Friends Groups. Therefore, the steps taken in the study are explained in details to avoid any question in the mind of other researchers.

Dependability is ensured when the findings are consistent and could be repeated. For this purpose, data collection and analysis information from different instruments and resources was represented in an overarching way to ensure that the findings are consistent with each other.

Finally, to ensure another crucial criterion, conformability, the findings should be shaped by the participants free from the bias or the interest of the researcher. To establish this, the role of triangulation in this study can be emphasized again to reduce the effect of researcher bias. In addition, although the researcher took part in CFG meetings, objective meeting reports were kept and confirmed by the members of the CFG.

3.6 Limitations

The present study has some limitations to be taken for consideration. One of the main limitations in this study is the restricted amount of time given to CFG meetings. As the instructors have loaded schedules, and different programmes, it was challenging to meet more than four times. This limitation was minimized by taking planned actions were taken in each CFG meeting. For the reliability of findings regarding the effectiveness of CFG, more meetings and collaboration can planned for further research.

Next, although a CFG coach does not officially require training to participate in a CFG meeting, most CFG communities highlights the importance of being led by an NSRF-certified coach, but anyone can participate. This might be another limitation of this study which could be expanded by adding an expert in CFG for future research.

Finally, as the context of the study was specific to one particular group, it is not possible to generalize the findings to different contexts. Adding a larger sample with different groups of students across various contexts might increase the external validity of this study.

Chapter 4

Results

This chapter presents the findings related to the overall perceptions and observed behaviours of EFL instructors about the use of authentic materials in EFL classrooms, the reasons behind the implementation of authentic materials in their classrooms practices, the influence of incorporating authentic materials in language classrooms and finally, the reflections of the two groups of instructors about the impact of CFG on their professional development. Data were collected through interviews, classroom observations, and reflective essays respectively.

4.1 Findings Related to the Perceptions and Observed Behaviours of EFL Instructors about the Use of Authentic Materials in their Classroom

Considering the first research question, the data were obtained through one-to-one interviews (structured) with the instructors and classroom observations conducted by the researcher prior to CFG meetings. The following part provides qualitative results regarding the pre-interviews and pre-classroom observations.

To begin with, in the pre-interviews, the participants were asked about their thoughts on the use of authentic materials, how they can be implemented in their classroom practices, how important they are and finally, whether the instructors required any training about implementing authentic materials in their classroom practices. The table below illustrates the selected responses of the participants to each question that represent their overall perceptions.

Table 3

Responses of the Participants to Each Question during the Interview

Interview Question Items	Selected responses by the participants
1. Use of authentic material	<p>Instructor 1 “Occasionally I integrate authentic materials”</p> <p>Instructor 2 “I try to use them as much as possible”</p> <p>Instructor 3 “I try to use them if I have enough time to prepare an effective lesson plan”</p> <p>Instructor 4 “What is authentic material?”</p>
2. The ways of implementing using authentic materials (level / skills / type of source)	<p>Instructor 1 “intermediate and higher” “vocabulary, grammar” / “songs, magazine or newspaper”</p> <p>Instructor 2 “beginning classes as well as advanced levels” / “vocabulary” “videos, websites”</p> <p>Instructor 3 “intermediate and higher”/ “grammar, reading” / “movie clips, articles (only partially), songs”</p> <p>Instructor 4 “intermediate and higher”/ “reading, vocabulary” / “newspapers”</p>
3. The importance of using authentic materials	<p>Instructor 1 “makes the lesson more engaging”, “reinforce the connection between the real world and the classroom”</p> <p>Instructor 2 “I see them as compulsory in language teaching”</p> <p>Instructor 3 “very important if we want to expose the students something other than the text book”</p> <p>Instructor 4 “They are very important to keep students focused”</p>
4. Need for teacher training	<p>Instructor 1 “I don’t think it requires a certain specialty”</p> <p>Instructor 2 “I’ve had some before so I don’t find it very necessary”</p> <p>Instructor 3 “I need it to help me identify what types of materials are good for what proficiency levels”</p> <p>Instructor 4 “I could learn how to implement them better”</p>

To begin with, all four instructors were asked whether they integrated any authentic materials in their classroom activities and their reasons for doing so. Three of the instructors expressed that they were using such materials although not often. One of them asked for the definition of authentic material for clarification. When explained, he said that he was using them but he was not familiar with the term of authentic material. The other two instructors reported that they were using authentic materials in all levels starting from beginning classes to advanced levels. The other three instructors told that they used authentic materials starting from intermediate and above.

Concerning the target language area, vocabulary and grammar came first when compared to reading and listening skills. Instructors mostly preferred to use authentic materials with the purpose to introduce or revise new vocabulary and grammar items. Among the type of materials used by the instructors in their EFL classes, magazines, newspapers, songs and videos are the most common ones although one of the instructors prefer online applications and another one prefers books by famous authors.

Finally, all four instructors stated that using such materials are of great importance and they expressed this by referring to such materials as “very important”, “of great importance”, compulsory in language teaching”. While two of the instructors expressed that training would be helpful for them to implement such materials into their lessons, the other two expressed no need for such training because they did not think it required a certain specialty.

In brief, the findings from the pre-CFG interviews suggest that both native and non-native instructors share similar perceptions towards the use of authentic materials in their classrooms. In terms of implementation of such materials, their importance and types of sources and tasks they use, and the importance they attach to authentic materials.

Furthermore, pre-CFG classroom observations were carried out to find out the instructors’ practices in the classroom before participating in CFG. The table below shows the findings of the first lesson observation according to the checklist which included four items including type of authentic material used; the skill and/or language focus it’s used for; the level of the material (appropriateness) and lastly, other (points need improving).

Table 4

Results from the Pre-CFG Classroom Observations

	Type of Authentic Material Used	The Skill and/or Language Focus	The Level of the Material (Appropriateness)	Other
Instructor 1	Video, Newspaper Article	Skimming	Challenging above the students' level	Not a very clear task
Instructor 2	Video	Vocabulary	Below their level/ too easy	The aim of use was not clear- did not contribute to the flow of the lesson
Instructor 3	Video	Vocabulary	Appropriate for the level of the students	
Instructor 4	Video, pictures	Brainstorming	Challenging above the students' level	Students could not benefit from the material as it was above their level

As displayed in the findings above, in the lessons prepared by the instructors, video was the most preferred source of material as all four instructors showed a video at the beginning of the lesson to introduce the topic of the lesson and to get students interested. Other sources that were used were pictures and a newspaper article. Two of the instructors benefited from the materials in terms of vocabulary, and other two in terms of reading and writing. The level of appropriateness varied from too easy to above students' level as observed from the students' reactions and failure to understand the materials. Finally, there was not a specific task designed to deal with the material from a linguistic or non-linguistic aspect.

To summarize, the findings from one-to-one interviews and the lesson observations suggested four common features emerging from the instructors' answers. These are awareness of authentic materials, selection of mostly media enhanced sources, their use with higher levels and rare use in teaching practices.

4.2 Findings Related to the Potential Reasons behind the Implementation of Authentic Materials in EFL Classrooms

As for the second research question of this study, the participating instructors were asked to state the possible reasons behind the use of authentic materials in their classroom practices. Data were collected from the structured interviews (pre-CFG). The interview findings revealed that effectiveness, creativity, student engagement and interest were among the main reasons behind incorporating authentic materials in EFL classrooms. The following quotations support these findings:

1. [...] Authentic materials make the lesson more effective and engaging. (Instructor 1, Interview data, 19th Oct.,2015)
2. [...] Lessons become more interesting and creative by incorporating authentic tasks in my lesson. (Instructor 4, Interview, 19th Oct.,2015)

Furthermore, two of the instructors shared the reason that that using authentic materials with higher level classes such as intermediate and advanced was more challenging for the students as shown in the following quotations:

3. [...] I tend to use authentic materials more in classes with higher level classes as it is more challenging for the students. (Instructor 3, Interview data, 20th Oct.,2015)
4. [...] I especially use authentic materials in intermediate or advanced classes as the students are more proficient and they find these types of task challenging. (Instructor 1, Interview data, 20th Oct.,2015)

Finally, based on the classroom observations, getting the attention and raising students' interest were the other two reasons behind the implementation of authentic materials in EFL classrooms. Regarding this point, two of the participating instructors said:

5. [...] The EFL instructors use authentic materials such as videos to get the attention of their students. (Classroom observation notes, 2nd Nov., 2015)
6. [...] By using authentic materials, the EFL instructors raised the students' interest in the subject. (Classroom observation notes, 2nd Nov., 2015)

4.3 Findings Related to the Impact of CFG on the use of Authentic Materials in EFL Classrooms

For the purposes of this study, the third research question was concerned with influence of CFG on the use of authentic materials in English language classrooms. The data were obtained from classroom observations (post-CFG) comparing it with pre-CFG observations and semi-structured interviews (post-CFG) which are thoroughly reported in the following section.

To begin with, for the post-CFG classroom observations, the same checklist as in the pre-observation was used emphasizing the same components namely, type of authentic material used; the skill and/or language focus it is used for; the level of the material (appropriateness) and lastly, other (points need improving). The table below shows the findings in comparison with from the pre-CFG observations.

Table 5
Comparison of Pre-CFG and Post-CFG Classroom Observations

	Pre-CFG	Post-CFG
Sources	Videos, Articles	Pictures, Online Application, Map, Article, Charts,
Tasks/purpose	Teaching Vocabulary, Brainstorming, Reading(Skimming)	Pre-Teaching Vocabulary, Revising Vocabulary, Discussion, Warm-Up, Writing
Appropriateness	Above Students' Level (2) Below Students' Level (1) Appropriate (1)	Appropriate for the level of the students.(4)
Other (points need improving)	There was not a clear task that was used with the materials.	All instructors created a task for each material used with a clear purpose.

As it can be seen in the table above, there is an obvious change in the variety of materials in the lessons after CFG meetings. Specifically, while there were only two types of materials used by all four instructors, different types of materials were used in the second lesson after the CFG meetings.

In addition, the participating instructors used the authentic materials for a wide range of purposes in the lessons after CFG meetings. The biggest change was noticed

in the level of the materials that were brought to the classroom. While the majority of instructors found it difficult to select materials appropriate to students' level in their first lesson, the materials that they used after CFG meetings were more suitable for level of proficiency. Finally, the tasks designed for each authentic material had clearer and more purposeful tasks in the lesson after CFG meetings.

Furthermore, all four participating instructors were asked to express their ideas whether CFG had any influence on the use of authentic materials in their classroom practices.

All four instructors responded positively regarding the impacts of CFG on their use of authentic materials in the classroom. They stated that after CFG, they were more aware about how to use these types of materials in class. The exchanged ideas with their colleagues and discussed the effective ways of integrating authentic materials in their classroom practices. Their responses are illustrated in the following quotations:

7. [...] I was using authentic materials but I was not that aware of it. After our meetings, I am more knowledgeable and aware of what I am doing. (Instructor 1, Interview data, 3rd Feb., 2016)
8. [...] I can say that after these meetings I started to think about the integration of such materials into my lesson more often. It was good to share ideas with each other as we became more aware of how to use them in our classroom. (Instructor 2, Interview data, 3rd Feb., 2016)
9. [...] I think that CFG did definitely affect my take on using authentic materials in the classroom. Prior these meeting, I simply used such materials. However, after getting together with the group, I learned more as we shared our ideas and learned from each other's experiences. (Instructor 3, Interview data, 3rd Feb., 2016)
10. [...] I now know better what is important and what is appropriate about using authentic materials. For example, today when I showed a video in the class, I knew what my aim was so it worked well as we discussed about this issue in our CFG meeting. (Instructor 4, Interview, 3rd Feb., 2016)

Based on the responses of the instructors in the pre- and post-CFG interviews and post-CFG observations, the highly positive impact of CFG meetings could be

easily seen regarding the awareness of both groups of teachers as well as the effectiveness about the implementation of such materials in EFL classrooms.

4.4 Findings Related to the Impact of CFG on Professional Development of the Participating Instructors

In an attempt to answer the fourth and the last research question of this study, data were obtained from reflective essays. Specifically, all four EFL instructors were asked to write a reflective essay expressing their thoughts and feelings the impact of CFG on their professional development. The findings revealed that CFG had major influence on their teaching practices, student participation and lastly, instructors' relationship with their colleagues.

As previously stated, one major impact of CFG was on the teaching practices of the EFL instructors. All four instructors stated that they benefited from CFG meeting and discussions as it helped them to become more confident and efficient in developing tasks for their classroom. In other words, CFG created awareness on their classroom practices and encouraged them to make more informed decisions as shown in the following comments.

11. [...] CFG meetings enabled me to become more informed of the options on how to choose and incorporate authentic tasks in my lessons. (Instructor 1, Reflective essay, 24th Feb.,2016)
12. [...] After CFG meetings, I feel more comfortable and somewhat more qualified about how to make decisions about using authentic tasks and develop such materials in my class. (Instructor 3, Reflective essay, 24th Feb.,2016)

Another aspect of CFG that the EFL instructors reported to have benefited from was the related to student motivation and participation. All instructors expressed that they observed positive changes in students' motivation and participation as illustrated below:

13. [...] After CFG, I was able to create a more positive classroom productive environment. Students were more motivated and eager to participate in the lesson. (Instructor 2, Reflective essay, 24th Feb.,2016)

14. [...] CFT meetings helped me to motivate my learners. I used more meaningful and enjoyable tasks, which increased their participation. (Instructor 4, Reflective essay, 24th Feb.,2016)

Finally, the last strength of CFG suggested by the instructors was the idea of working collaboratively. Working in a group created a positive atmosphere amongst the group members. The friendly and involving environment CFG also improved their relationships by helping them get to know each other better, and allowing them to pool their knowledge and experiences.

15. [...] One of the most beneficial aspects of CFG lies in its cooperative nature; when teachers have the opportunity to come together to share and discuss teaching practices and pedagogical styles – new ideas emerge, take shape and the discussions facilitate more fruitful and meaningful exchanges. (Instructor 4, Reflective essay, 24th Feb.,2016)

16. [...] In bringing teachers together to discuss classroom teaching practices and materials, it certainly promotes a more collaborative school culture. As teachers, we should welcome input from others, for just like students, we too, are constantly learning how to become teachers that are more effective. (Instructor 3, Reflective essay data, 24th Feb.,2016)

To summarize, the findings based on the analysis of reflective essays from the instructors indicated that participating in CFG raised the teachers' awareness about the use of authentic materials and tasks, enhanced student learning as well as improving collaboration among colleagues.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Discussion of Findings for Research Questions

The aim of this study was to explore the use of authentic materials through CFG in EFL classrooms at a language preparatory program of a foundation university in Turkey. Specifically, it focused on the perceptions and observed-behaviours of both native and non-native instructors on using authentic materials, the reasons behind the implementation of authentic materials in language classrooms, the influence of CFG on the use of authentic materials and finally, the impact of CFG on the professional development of the participating instructors.

For the purposes of this study, a qualitative case study design was adopted. The data were gathered from interviews, observations and reflective essays. This chapter discusses the results of this study referring to each research question and offers recommendations for further research and practice.

5.1.1 Discussion about the perceptions and observed behaviours of EFL instructors about use of authentic materials in EFL classrooms. The first research question of this study attempted to investigate the perceptions and observed-behaviours of EFL instructors (both native and non-native) towards the use of authentic materials in their classroom practices.

Considering the implementation of authentic materials, the two groups of instructors showed a high level of awareness for the implementation of such materials in their lesson plans after the CFG experience. These findings support Nunan (1999) who stated exposing learners to authentic materials is an indispensable part of learning process due to their rich input.

Furthermore, majority of the instructors indicated the importance of authentic material use with classrooms of higher proficiency level. Since most authentic materials contain a more complex language, vocabulary items and structures, it might be challenging for higher group of learners, which would aid with their language development. Besides, the type of authentic materials implemented by the EFL instructors were mostly media enhanced sources such as videos and songs. A possible

reason behind this finding might be the fact that they can easily be reached and being online makes these sources more popular for both the students and instructors.

To summarize, the participating instructors (both native and non-native), shared common viewpoints on the use of authentic materials in their classrooms. They emphasized its importance in the integration of lesson plans which would help with the students' language development.

On the other hand, pre-CFG lesson observations showed that the most common type of authentic material used by the instructors was online videos. As stated in the previous section of this thesis, the instructors might have chosen to use videos due to their availability on the internet as well as popularity among students. In addition, videos provide a refreshing change from the textbook and seem to draw students' attention easily. These arguments are also supported by Şaraplı (2011) who claim authentic materials are beneficial for learners' motivation and participation.

Besides, the other two most commonly used sources were pictures and articles. The reason why written authentic materials were not preferred might be due to their level of complexity and students' lack of interest in dealing with written materials. As stated by Kılıçkaya (2004), using authentic materials frustrate and de-motivate the weak learners due to their lack of required skills and vocabulary to deal with the required materials.

Furthermore, the level of appropriateness observed in the lessons varied from too easy to more difficult. The reasons for this might be the challenging nature of authentic materials. Finding an authentic material that is both appropriate and interesting for learners can also be challenging for teachers. Abundance of materials available online can also lead to spending too much time for teachers to choose one that is appropriate both for the level and the aim of the lesson.

Finally, the aims or tasks, chosen for the authentic materials, were not very clear or well prepared. The fact that there was not a well-developed task can be an indication that the instructors ignored the linguistic and cultural aspect of authentic materials while focusing only on motivation.

To summarize, the interview and lesson observation findings revealed that EFL instructors tend to use media enhanced sources, especially videos, with students with higher level of competency. They also focused more on the student engagement and motivational aspect of authentic materials rather than dealing with them linguistically and culturally. It is also possible to conclude that the perceptions and observed-

behaviours of the EFL instructors clearly showed the importance of incorporating authentic materials in EFL classrooms.

5.1.2 Discussion about the potential reasons behind the implementation of authentic materials in EFL classrooms. As for the second research question of this study, the possible reasons why instructors preferred to use authentic materials were explored through structured pre-CFG interviews. The responses from the students revealed that there were various reasons that encouraged the participating instructors to implement such materials into their lessons.

To begin with, the most notable reason behind incorporating authentic materials for instructors was making the lessons more creative and engaging. Since authentic materials can be more up-to-date in terms of language and content, students would be more interested in the material. In addition, as stated by Kılıçkaya (2004), authentic materials are not originally developed for pedagogical purposes; they contain examples of language that is more natural and realistic.

Another reason expressed by the instructors, similar to the one mentioned above, was about raising interest and motivating students. To put it briefly, authentic materials can motivate learners to communicate more effectively because they help make communication real. By providing variety of information about any topic, authentic materials also provide a refreshing change from the textbook (Thomas, 2014).

In addition, the EFL instructors stated that they preferred to choose authentic materials due to their challenging nature, which would be appropriate for students with higher level of proficiency. In this case, students' motivation can increase as they use more of what they know, and deal with a material that serves a useful purpose. All these findings demonstrate that the EFL instructors are paying attention to the use of authentic materials by designing their lessons more student-centred to enhance student motivation and engagement.

5.1.3 Discussion about the influence of CFG on the use of authentic materials in EFL classrooms. Regarding the impact of CFG on the use of authentic materials in EFL classrooms, the participating instructors were interviewed and observed after CFG meetings. The findings were compared and the results revealed that there were significant changes in instructors' use of authentic materials after CFG meetings.

Considering the findings from the post-CFG observations, it is clear that there were dramatic changes in the classroom practices regarding the types of authentic materials, range of tasks and level of appropriateness. To put it differently, the findings based on lesson observations displayed positive changes of the participating teachers regarding the use of authentic material in their classroom practices.

As for the focus of each CFG meeting, the decisions were made after pre-CFG interviews and lesson observations. The most noticeable change was related to the collaboration among instructors. During one of the CFG meetings, the instructors explored the online sources available and exchanged their idea together. This could have encouraged them to try out new things in their lessons. Other significant changes were about the difficulty level of authentic materials along with the authentic tasks used in the classroom practices. As Key (2006) mentioned, CFG has the potential to influence the implementation of authentic materials in teachers' classroom practices quite positively as illustrated in this study as well.

Furthermore, parallel to the findings from post-CFG lesson observations, the participants mentioned other positive impacts of CFG on their use of authentic materials. Specifically, the interviews after CFG revealed that the EFL instructors mostly benefited from the meetings in terms of material selection. CFG meetings also created awareness in finding and implementing a variety of materials appropriate for the students' level of proficiency. Based on the responses of the instructors, it is possible to say that CFG meetings contributed to the incorporation of authentic materials in their classrooms in terms of awareness raising, resource availability and educational context.

To summarize, the findings of the last research question confirmed the argument of Kersey (2014), showing that CFG meetings have provided professionally significant transformations for the instructors taking part in these meetings. It supported their teaching practices and provided them with to approach of authentic materials use from different perspectives.

5.1.4 Discussion about the reflections of the EFL instructors about the impact of CFG on their professional development. The last research question of the study addressed the impact of CFG on instructors' professional development. In other words, it attempted to identify what kind of changes the instructors went through after their participation in CFG meeting. The findings of the analysis of the reflective essays

indicated that CFG is effective in terms of establishing relationship among colleagues, classroom practices as well as student attitudes.

According to the results, the most important benefit of CFG was about improving teaching practices. The meetings encouraged teachers to become more reflective and critical about their work in the classroom and therefore, inspired them to think of different teaching styles. This finding supports the arguments of Kersey (2014) that CFG helps teachers to become more aware of what changes they personally need in their own educational practices.

Another important aspect pointed out by the instructors was working collaboratively. Working together with their colleagues made the instructors feel more comfortable in exchanging ideas and asking for advice. This aspect of CFG confirmed the studies conducted by Constantino (2011) and Fahey (2011) stating that CFG is significant for creating an environment that was both supportive and positively critical. The participants reported feeling less isolated and more supported by the other participants in the CFG. They were more collaborative and reflective on their work as well as more open to give and receive feedback about their practices. These findings confirmed the arguments of Vo and Nguyen (2010) in that collaborative discussions as in CFG allows teachers to develop their own perspectives and to model strengths for others.

Finally, the impact of CFG on EFL instructors' professional development were confirmed in a similar study carried out by Aktekin (2013) in Turkey which revealed that CFG process helped the EFL instructors to build up good work and social relationships, resulting in a 'sense of community' and a mutual understanding.

In brief, the idea behind CFG is to create an environment for teachers with opportunities to challenge their own instruction and practices. This challenge is critical since improving practices bring positive changes that both the educators and the students need. A successful CFG is achieved with the help of a group of 'critical' friends, who share the same purpose and offer support for each other. (Bambino, 2002, p. 25-27) Accordingly, the reflections of participants in this study supported these crucial aspects of CFG and the arguments that CFG encourages collaboration and aids teachers with their professional development.

5.2 Conclusions

The results of this study indicated that taking part in CFG has beneficial gains both for native and non-native EFL instructors. The data collected through interviews,

lesson observations and reflective essays indicated that all participants were quite contented with their experience in various aspects that contributed to their instruction, collaboration with their colleagues and students' participation.

To conclude, the purpose of this thesis was to find out the effectiveness of CFG on the use of authentic materials in the language preparatory programs. Therefore, the study specifically highlighted the importance of perceptions and observed-behaviours of EFL instructors along with the reasons for using authentic materials, the influence of CFG on the use of authentic materials in EFL classrooms and finally, the impact of CFG on teachers' professionalism. With the obtained findings, this study identifies various beneficial aspects of CFG that the instructors gained.

5.3 Recommendations for Further Research

This study has several important recommendations for further research. First of all, a further study could be conducted over a longer period of time to add more perspectives and insights into the issue. Continuous professional development activities are an indispensable part of inspiring teachers to broaden their perceptions and pedagogical practices. Therefore, it is recommended to replicate the present study over a longer period of time, specifically one semester or a school year to explore the impacts of CFG in the long run.

Second, future research should also be conducted with more participants because CFG is a relatively new form of professional development. As the institutions are now attaching more importance to professional development of their teachers, CFG can be seen as a way to meet the needs of the institutions, teachers themselves and the students.

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APPENDICES

A. Observation Checklist

Name of the instructor: _____

	Notes of the Observer	Points Discussed with the Instructor
Type of authentic material used		
The skill and/or language focus its used for		
The level of the material		
Other (points need improving)		

B. Reflective Essay Template

Please reflect on your experience in participating CFG as well as its impact on your professional development by referring to the following points:

- Impact on teaching/learning (teacher practice/ instruction in the classroom)
- Relationships with the group members
- Student engagement
- Comments/additional information to share, final product, etc



C. Critical Friends Group Meeting Log

Facilitator: _____ **Date:** _____

Sign-In:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Summary of the Session:

Next Meeting (agenda items, action items): _____

D. Interview questions

Pre-CFG Interview Questions

1. Do you use authentic materials in your classroom? Why or why not?
2. How do you use them? (skills, proficiency level, types of sources)
3. How important do you think it is to use them?
4. Do you think you need training for implementing authentic materials into your lessons?

Post- CFG Interview Questions

1. Did CFG have any influence on the use of authentic materials in language classrooms? If yes, how?

E. Curriculum Vitae

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Surname, Name: Günbay, Elif Başak

Nationality: Turkish (T.C.)

Date and Place of Birth: 30 October 1990, İzmir

Marital Status: Single

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EDUCATION

Degree	Institution	Year of Graduation
MA	Bahçeşehir University	2016
BA	Ankara University	2012

WORK EXPERIENCE

Year	Place	Enrollment
2012- Present	Gediz University	English Instructor

FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Advanced English

CERTIFICATES

Cambridge ESOL Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (Celta), 2013

CLIL for Universities, Celt Academy, 2013

PUBLICATIONS

1. Günbay, E.B & Aydemir G. (2011). "Tackling Speaking challenges faced by low-level learners of English through consultation with students". *Teacher-researchers in Action*, (1), 97-108
2. Günbay, E.B & Aydemir G. (2014) "Using Critical Thinking in Grammar Lessons" *Professional Development Through Teacher Research* (1), 55-67

HOBBIES

Travelling, Hiking, Movies