

THE USE OF AUTHENTIC READING MATERIALS

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Abstract

The current article is devoted to the particular the popularity of authentic materials in English language teaching. Nowadays, the demand for English is growing. Therefore, there is a growing interest among students to learn the language. However, not only the student but also the language teacher must have his / her own teaching skills. There are many ways to learn a foreign language today, one of which is using language by the help of authentic language. One of them is Communicative language teaching with the help of authentic materials. The aim of the using authentic materials in teaching writing foreign language. It is developing students' semantic perception and understanding of foreign speech, as well as mastering the language material for constructing speech utterances. This article discusses the use of using authentic materials to successfully master English as a foreign language so that students must know not only linguistic forms, but also be able to use them for real communication.

Keywords: authentic materials, CLT, theory, practice, explanation.

Introduction

In The Classroom one of the main ideas of using authentic materials in the classroom is to “expose” the learner to as much real language as possible. Wallace (1992:79) indicates that even if the classroom is not a “real-life” situation, authentic materials do have a very important role within it. It has been argued that by taking a text out of its original context, it loses its authenticity: “As soon as texts, whatever their original purpose, are brought into classrooms for pedagogic purposes they have, arguably, lost authenticity.” Even if true, the learner is still exposed to real discourse and not the artificial language of course textbooks, which tend not to contain any incidental or improper examples. They also tend to reflect the current teaching trend. Authentic materials also give the reader the chances to gain real life information and consider what is going on in the world around them. More times than not, they have something to say, be it using information, a review. They also produce a sense of achievement.



Guariento & Morley (2001) analyses that using real information from a real text in a new/different language can be extremely motivating, therefore increasing students' motivation for learning by exposing them to real language. Students also do the reflection the changes in language use, (again something that does not occur in textbooks, which become very dated, very quickly) as well as giving the learner the proof that the language is real and not only studied in the classroom: "Authentic texts can be motivating because they are proof that the language is used for real-life purposes by real people." Nuttall (1996:172) implies that the wide variety of different types of text means that it is easier to find something that will interest the learner and may even encourage further reading or reading for pleasure. An advantage of taking a complete newspaper or magazine into classroom, rather than photocopies of an article, is that students can actually choose what they want to read. The more the learner reads, the better a reader he will become, not only improving his language level but also confidence. If the text interests the learner it can also be related to his own experiences.

One of the aims of authentic materials is to do a favour the student react in the same way L1 speakers react in their first language (L1). Learners who live in the target language environment, once outside of the classroom will encounter a variety of situations in which different reading purposes/skills are required. We can admit that learners are being exposed to real language and they feel that they are learning the "real" language. The main advantages of using authentic materials in the classroom therefore include:

- 1) Having a positive effect on student motivation;
- 2) Giving authentic cultural information;
- 3) Exposing students to real language;
- 4) Relating more closely to students' needs;
- 5) Supporting a more creative approach to teaching.

These are what make us excited and willing to use authentic materials in our classrooms, but while using them, it is inevitable that we face some problems. Martinez (2002) figures out the negative aspects of authentic materials are that they can be too culturally biased, often a good knowledge of cultural background is required when reading, as well as too many structures being mixed, causing lower levels problems when decoding the texts. Students often bring copies of newspaper articles (in particular the tabloids) or song lyrics to the classroom, asking to translate them after having looked up each word in the dictionary and not understood a single word. Richards (2001) notes that authentic materials



often contain difficult language, unneeded vocabulary items and complex language structures, which can often create problems for the teacher too. They can also become very dated, very quickly but unlike textbooks can be updated or replaced much easier and more cost effectively. The biggest problem with authentic materials is that if the wrong type of text is chosen, the vocabulary may not be relevant to the learner's needs and too many structures can create difficulty. This can have the opposite effect, rather than motivate the learner, it can de-motivate and in Krashenite terms "put up the effective filter". By the help of authentic materials students are informed about what is happening in the world. When bringing authentic materials into the classroom, it should always be done with a purpose, as highlighted by Senior "...we need to have a clear pedagogic goal in mind: what precisely we want our students to learn from these materials." (Senior 2005:71). Students feel more confident, more secure when handling authentic materials as long as the teacher gives them with pedagogical support. Authentic materials should be used in accordance with students' ability, with suitable tasks being given in which total understanding is not important. In order to overcome the problems created by difficult authentic texts, one solution is to simplify them according to the level of the learner. This can be done by removing any difficult words or structures but this can also remove basic discourse qualities, making the text "less" authentic. The basic parameters to consider when simplifying a text are: - Linguistic simplicity : grammatical structures, lexical items and readability; - Cognitive simplicity : age, education, interests of the learner; - Psychological simplicity : does it follow traditional social norms? Another possible solution is to give text related tasks. They are three basic types: Pre-reading : used not just to test or compensate for linguistic/socio-cultural inadequacies but also used to activate existing schemata; While-reading : used to encourage the learner to be a flexible, active reader also to promote a dialogue between reader and writer; Post-reading : often are questions that follow a text, used to test understanding but sometimes a good schemata will be enough. Rather than just simplifying the text by changing its language, it can be made more approachable by eliciting students' existing knowledge in pre-reading discussion, reviewing new vocabulary before reading, and then asking students to perform tasks that are within their competence, such as skimming to get the main idea or scanning for specific information, before they begin intensive reading. The reading approach must be authentic too. Students should read the text in a way that matches the reading purpose, the type of text, and the way



people normally read. This means that reading aloud will take place only in situations where it would take place outside the classroom. Reading is an activity with a purpose. The purpose for reading guides the reader's selection of texts.

Thomas (2014) says that one description of authentic materials is that their purpose is to communicate meaning and information and that they are produced for real communication rather than to teach language. Authentic materials for the English language classroom are often free and very easy to find online or perhaps in certain locations in your communities. Here are some examples:

- TV shows, news segments, documentaries, movie clips and trailers, online videos, and commercials
- Radio broadcasts, songs, and podcasts
- Photographs, artwork, signs, postcards, maps, and advertisements
- Magazines, letters and emails, news articles, brochures, websites, blogs, and social media posts
- Recipes, food labels, bus and train schedules, menus, and price tags and product descriptions.

Methods or Materials

The best content to select depends on the learners, their level of English and the course content the teacher wishes to focus on. It's also a good idea to find out the learners' interests – after all, there's no point trying to get students fascinated by a text on the latest movie if they're all fans of action films.

A situation should be reflected to the materials that learners may face in an English-speaking environment – this will help them transition into a world where English is the norm. In this world, people use abbreviations, body language is important and they'll use “filler” sounds – such as “ummm” – when they are speaking English – and learners will encounter these in authentic material. It's important not to overwhelm learners with the first piece of authentic material. So to begin with, choose articles, songs or sections of TV programmes or movies which aren't too difficult to understand or take too long to get through. Here are two ideas for using authentic material in class: do remember to develop the ideas into proper lesson plans and explain the aims thoroughly to your learner.

1. Restaurant Menus: Order Your Favourite Dish

Food is important to everyone, so introduce language learners to some of the common dishes in English-speaking countries so that they will be able to order meals with confidence. Many restaurants have their menus online, so you can easily download them (no need to walk or drive around the neighbourhood!). Try to use local restaurants, which will make it more meaningful for your



students, and make sure you have plenty of copies of the menu. You can then either go through the menu and ask students to guess what the meals are, or they can write down what they would order. You could use different menus for each course, which would widen the types of dishes you can cover during the learning activity. You or another team member could pretend to be the waiter or waitress and your students can practise their spoken English by reading their order back to you. At the end of the task, you could encourage learners to add up the cost of their courses to calculate their bill and even ask them to add on a 10% tip to mirror the experience of being in a real restaurant. Remember, that these suggestions focus on different skills, so you could use them to form lesson plans for a “speaking” lesson, a “reading” lesson, etc.

2.Songs: Recognizing English Lyric

Listening to songs with English lyrics is a great way of boosting skills in listening and pronunciation, and confidence in using the language. And students will always respond positively to a lesson that involves their favourite singer or bands. Ask your learners to write down their favourite artist and a song by them that they like and have listened to a few times. They can then try to remember the lyrics, or look at the video on YouTube – they only need to write down a few lines of the song. Then ask them to really listen to the lyrics for useful vocabulary, phrases and expressions for everyday language that includes colloquial speech. The language used in lyrics can be casual, tell a simple story or convey strong emotions, which should help learners to establish a connection with the language because it will give them new ways to describe their feelings in different situations. You could even ask them to come up with alternative words, as a way of further increasing and using their vocabulary. Some song lyrics are commonly misheard, so you could create a quiz in which learners have to choose the next words – words that grammatically fit into the lyrics.

Results

Using authentic materials in the ELT classrooms have several advantages. They are:

- Authentic materials are selected according to the needs and interests of the learners.
- They are useful to minimize the level of hesitation among the learners.
- They always provide situational language for the learners.
- The learners are exposed to real-life situations.
- They are very economical to use in ELT classrooms.
- They are easily accessible for the teachers.
- They are available



everywhere. • They are very much helpful to develop social language skills. • They develop the learners ability to interpret the topic they learn. • They enhance the learners critical thinking. • They develop creativity among the learners and the teachers. • They make the learners aware of the situation in the society. • They are useful for the teachers to teach the same material for different classes. • They promote the learners to concentrate more on the language skills. • They always motivate the learners to read for pleasure. • They are easily available everywhere. • They promote the learners with higher level of motivation. • They are more useful for the students who are very slow learners. • They promote the average learners to perform well. • They enhance the ability of explanation and conversation of the learners. • They support an artistic approach to ELT. • They make the teaching and learning process easy and interesting. • They produce a sense of achievement among the learners. • They are more useful for the teachers to prepare alternate materials. • They offer variety of language contexts, registers, genres and styles of both written and spoken discourses. • They are more useful for the learners whose previous knowledge and educational background is very low. • They really build a connection between the outside world and the English classrooms. • They promote the learners to take part in the classroom discussions actively. • They are useful for the teachers to prepare the materials suitable for the learners. • They serve as mediating artifact for contextualizing English language learning. • They have a positive effect on learners' motivation. • They develop the learners' analytical as well as reasoning skills. • They are generally equipped with sound and pictures so that they are eye-catching and more interesting. • They encourage the learners to take part in the classroom tasks and perform well in the given tasks. Since the authentic materials have several benefits and they are very useful to the teachers and learners to improve their teaching and learning skills, the English language teachers and learners should utilize the authentic materials in a proper way to yield better results. Eventually, the success of the use of authentic material is on how the language teachers select the relevant authentic materials. Hence, it is high time to discuss the use of the authentic materials by teachers in the ELT classrooms.

Discussions

The Use of Authentic Materials in the ELT Classrooms With the advent of the internet, the teachers of English can choose the authentic materials to teach in their classrooms. Even though there are some disadvantages of authentic



materials such as they become outdated (news), they are sometimes too culturally biased, the vocabulary may not be useful for the learners' immediate use and so on, the authentic materials are useful in many ways. One of the best sources of authentic materials which are more useful in the ELT classrooms is the newspapers. Newspapers publish latest and burning news every day and the teachers can adopt the useful news reports as authentic materials to teach the learners of English. Since the language used in the newspapers differ from one news and the other and the vocabulary and grammatical structures also vary from day to day, it enhances the English language learners to grasp and understand the use of language in a variety of ways. Newspapers are also useful for the English language learners to improve their language skills. Newspapers present news on a variety of topics including education columns, sports columns, geographical and historical columns, cultural activities columns, etc. They also present the day-to-day language with all the possible idiomatic expressions of the local culture. The language styles that are found in the newspapers are not to be found in the prescribed textbooks and the newspapers can be analyzed in various ways such as for academic writing as the text for stylistics and semantics. Ever since the newspapers publish news related to real life events, they arouse curiosity among the learners of English. Moreover, they provide knowledge to the learners and offer a practical way of indulging the learners of ELT in learning the English language in a natural and way. Newspapers are used to develop the English language learners' reading comprehension, writing skills, vocabulary skills, grammatical skills and critical analysis. Most of the learners intend to read the local or regional newspapers since the language used in newspapers is easily understood and comprehensible. The learners can browse the internet and can read regional, national and international newspapers. The authentic materials taken from the newspapers are useful to give pre-activity tasks which can foster the learning skills of the learners when the material is given for them in the form of assignments. With the help of newspaper articles the learners can improve their vocabulary and the learners can grasp the variety of the presentation of the news items. Jacob J. S. says, "Newspaper gives the people the eyes to see themselves, gives them the ears to hear themselves and hear to the world, it gives people the voice by which they can make themselves heard in the world". Newspapers are very informational and provide very influential education to the learners. They are the cheapest and most affordable reading materials for the learners to buy. The teachers of English can make use of materials from the daily



newspapers such as articles, photographs, pictures and advertisements to teach in the ELT classrooms. Since the print media plays a dominant role in using the authentic materials, they can be integrated into the ELT classrooms to perform some useful leisure time activities. Newspapers help the learners to learn the language and they get wonderful practice of the language. Newspapers not only enhance the learners' observation and critical thinking skills but also promote the learners' imagination. Since there are innumerable advantages of using newspapers in the ELT classrooms, the English teachers should make use of the available and useful materials for the learners to promote their language skills. Magazines are enormously used as rich source of authentic materials in the ELT classrooms as they are very motivating and inspire a wide range of activities. Magazines help the learners in developing the language skills, vocabulary and grammar. Magazines are an asset to the learners since the learners of English can get an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the latest news and recent reports. Grundy (1993) says, "It is important to develop a wide amount of activities that can be used even if the material is not timely. It is essential for the teacher to think creatively to be able to use a specific activity for a specific text". The teachers of English can make use of the available magazine pictures to perform certain task even if the learners' English proficiency is very low to read a magazine. The magazines used in the classroom should be related to the language or topics. The teachers can encourage the learners to select the magazines of their own interest and ask them to read it thoroughly and describe the content of it to the rest of the class. This kind of activity improves the learners' reading comprehension skills as well as summarizing and presentation skills. The teachers can give a list of headlines to the students and a short text or a sentence or sub-headings from each article of the magazine and ask the learners to match them by forming groups or pairs. The materials from the magazines can be used in many ways in the ELT classrooms and the teachers should select the useful and interesting materials for the learners to motivate them in learning the language in a learner-friendly environment. Media is used as an additional tool for language teachers to develop the presentation of the materials in the classrooms. Media plays a key role in engaging the learners' learning process of the language. The teachers of English have to select media that are used in teaching and learning process suitable for the learners' needs and interests. The selection of appropriate and proper media motivates the learners' to learn the learning process in a smooth way. The teachers of English should use communicative



media to give more information or explanation to the learners to understand the topic easily. Murcia (2001: 461) asserts, "Media tools are physical things used by the teacher to motivate the students by bringing a slice of real life into the classroom and by presenting language in its more complete communication complex". In teaching and learning process, media include computers, games, audiovisuals, graphs, pictures, boards and so on. There are several media used to teach vocabulary such as using games, using visuals (like booklets, pamphlets, brochures, etc.), using flash cards and using pictures and photographs. There are many advantages of using media in teaching and learning English. While teaching English using media as authentic materials, the learners will become more active and enthusiastic. Also, an interesting learning atmosphere is created in the English language classrooms and learners' motivation is increased using media. Brochures, Pamphlets and Flyers Brochures, pamphlets and flyers are the best key tools used for language teaching to promote the learners language skills and all of them are used for advertisement that offer a great and real information for the learners. In fact brochures are cost effective and they are widely used in teaching and learning English. Brochures come in numerous shapes and sizes and often come in bi-fold or tri-fold layout used as flyers, coupons or business cards. The teachers can encourage the learners to gather various brochures of museums, banks, libraries, travel agencies, car rental agencies and so on. Then the teachers can select any brochure where the hours of business are clearly visible. By using these brochures, the teachers can introduce several role-plays with the students according to their interests. This also paves a way to review the days of the week also. The teachers can also present their learners with a wide variety of travel brochures and involve the learners to talk about each of the destinations. The teachers should give a chance to the learners to select a particular destination and ask them to write about it why they like to travel to that particular place. Using the travel brochure, the teachers can enhance the language skills of the learners. The teachers can also ask the learners to collect some medical brochures from doctors' offices and use them to have some dialogue practices. Once the learners read the brochures in detail, the teachers can give them some comprehension questions to answer. Using the health brochures, the teachers can ask them various warm up questions related to different topics about S International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities 6 <http://www.shanlaxjournals.in> health. Undoubtedly, medical topics are hard to understand for the EFL/ESL learners to understand, medical brochures are written in a very clear and simple language



that they can be understood by any language learners. Indeed, medical brochures are the better sources of information for EFL/ESL learners to make better reading material than medical books or encyclopedias. Therefore, the teachers of English should adopt medical brochures as authentic materials as they are more essential for the English language learners not only to develop their language skills but also improve their knowledge about the medical field to prevent from diseases. Menus are available in all the restaurants and many of them have online menus. As food plays a major role in the lives of the people, especially in the lives of the students, the ELT teachers can introduce the menus as their authentic teaching materials. The teachers can motivate the learners to use the menus of the restaurants to have conversation with their peers. Since food is a favorite item for all the learners of English, they are highly motivated and participate actively in the classroom discussions. The learners also can order for food in the restaurants with more confidence. To introduce an activity using the menus, the teachers have to collect quite a few copies of the menus from different restaurants so that the learners can compare and contrast the price of the food items such as appetizers, drinks, soups, salad, entrees, meals and dessert. The teachers can introduce many activities in the classrooms. The teachers can give a worksheet to the learners and ask them to write down what type of food they can order for from each food station including the price section in it. Then the teachers can divide the classroom into groups so that the learners have to move together from one food station to the other one. The teachers should assign the duty of a waiter or waitress to a member of the group to take orders on the backside or the worksheet at each food station. The teachers should encourage the learners to use a dictionary with them to look up the terms related to food. The teachers act as managers and will be busy in clarifying the queries of the learners who act as customers. Finally, the learners also calculate the capacity of their spending and also learn how to tip the waiter or waitress to have the real experience of the restaurant in the classroom. As the learners of English develop their speaking as well as analytical and reasoning skills using menus in the classrooms, the teachers of English should try to introduce similar activities to enhance the learners' all the four language skills in real-time environment. Weather Reports Due to its audio-visual effects, television plays a major role in using it as authentic materials. The attractive ads, comics, songs, games, movies, weather reports, pictures and so on are of immense use to teach the students in the ELT classrooms. The teachers of English can make use of authentic materials to make the learning interesting and



fun in the classrooms with a dash of creativity. Therefore, the teachers can integrate authentic materials into their ESL/EFL classrooms to create interest among the learners by using the material that the learners needed. The teachers can introduce weather reports of different channels as authentic materials and the teachers should make the learners familiar with the climate of their countries by exposing them to the weather reports. Just by browsing the internet, the teachers can get the weather reports of different countries of the world. The teachers can select [www. weather.com](http://www.weather.com) to know the local, national as well as international weather forecast. This website features not only a wide range of weather reports but also some interesting aftermath disaster analysis. Another salient feature of [weather.com](http://www.weather.com) is to provide short weather write-ups as well as mini-clips to brush up the learners' listening comprehension. The teachers can make use the weather reports in many ways to enhance the learners' language skills. The teachers can read a weather report or show a video to the whole class and ask the learners to summarize the main important points from the weather report that they have listened or watched. The teachers can teach two or three new vocabulary items from the weather report and then ask the learners to find out at least five new vocabulary items related to the weather condition by dividing them into groups. This kind of activities will undeniably advance the language skills of the learners. So, the English language teachers should carefully select certain interested weather reports to their learners to develop their language skills in the English classrooms. There are many more authentic materials that are useful for the English teachers to adopt them as additional teaching materials in their classrooms and teachers should select some important and expedient materials that are more helpful for the learners. Moreover, the teachers should adopt authentic materials that highly influence their learners in learning the English language and perform well using the learned teaching items in and outside the classrooms.

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