IMPROVING STUDENTS' LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE IN THE CLASSROOM VIA AUTHENTIC MATERIALS

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Annotation: This article examines the notion of authenticity in language teaching. Based on the definitions of authenticity and related debates of the notion in the existing literature, this paper illustrates that authentic materials could be used in L2 reading classrooms by material adaptation. Implications for teaching are also discussed. Language teachers should understand the notion of authenticity, use authentic materials through graded tasks in class, and keep updated with the notion by learning from the existing literature.

Key words: authentic materials, communicative teaching approach, linguistic, intercultural competence.

What is authentic in London might not be authentic in Hanoi.(Kramsch and Sullivan)[1]
Since the use of authentic materials is one of the principles of the Communicative Language Teaching approach and emerges from the need to develop students' communicative skills for the real world, the word "authentic" is not new for English language teachers. However, to get a deeper insight into the characteristics and beneficial aspects of such materials, it would be necessary to look at what constitutes authenticity. For this purpose, I would like to analyze the following definitions: *Authenticity relates to the language produced by native speakers for native speakers in a particular language community*.[2]
From this definition, it is apparent that authentic materials are those texts, audios, and video materials that are prepared for the purpose of conveying information for the public that would accept it for information or for pleasure. More precisely, such materials are not aimed at teaching language to foreign students. To exemplify, the following types of materials can be assumed as authentic: radio broadcasts, tv broadcasts, newspaper articles, ads, user manuals, and many others.
Authenticity relates to culture, and the ability to behave or think like a target language group in order to be recognized and validated by them.[3]
            In this second definition, authenticity is explored from quite a different angle. The author states that authenticity is bound with culture and urges to behave and think in the manner of the language that is being learned And, if representatives of that culture recognize those features of behaviour as intrinsic for them, only then can certain manners or materials be recognized as authentic.
Authenticity relates to the qualities bestowed on a text by the receiver, in that it is not seen as something inherent in a text itself, but is imparted on it by the reader/listener. [4]
Well, in this perspective, authenticity is seen as something that the users of materials bring to the text. Therefore, authenticity develops when the materials are processed and are not exhibited prior to this. This approach to authenticity is primarily theoretical and, hence, might

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[1] Kramsch, C. and P. Sullivan. (1996): Appropriate pedagogy. *ELT Journal* 50/3, Pp 199–212.

[2] Porter, D. and J. Roberts (1981). Authentic listening activities. *ELT Journal* 36/1, Pp 37-47

[3] Kramsch, C. (1998). *Language and culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[4] Breen, M. (1983). Authenticity in the language classroom. *Applied Linguistics* 6/1, Pp 60-61

seem very abstract to many teachers as there is little practical relevance to the process of teaching.

An authentic text is a stretch of real language, produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort.[5]

In this definition, authenticity is equaled to the notion of "reality". And the words real, in all its forms: realistic, reality, refers to something that is accurate and true to life, actually existing and is not imagined, invented, or theoretical. So, what can be stressed out here is that the purpose of such materials is to convey some sort of massage for the real audience. And this can serve as a real criterion for the teachers while distinguishing authentic materials from non-authentic ones. If we take into consideration those deeply theoretical definitions and subscribe to those abstract features of authenticity, the term would become very generalized and thus meaningless for the process of education.

Thus, having in mind this clear feature of authentic materials, that is something designed by the real/ native user of the language to inform in some ways the real/native audience of the target language, it can be easier for the teacher to select authentic materials. However, though authenticity refers to something that is real, it does not always mean "good" or appropriate for the class material. Therefore, while selecting authentic materials for the lesson, not only the level of authenticity but also its "fitness to the learning purposes should be considered".[6]

No matter how good the materials are, they will not by themselves manage to cater to the different needs, wants, learning styles, attitudes, cultural norms and
experiences of individual learners.[7]

It has been acknowledged by the majority that using only textbook materials as the basis of teaching is not effective, since the language presented in coursebook texts is away from real, informal English. This means language learned through coursebooks does not prepare students for fluent and confident communication in real-life situations. Hence, a need for adjusting materials for the lessons appears. Duff and Maley suggest three principles that should be taken into consideration while evaluating authentic materials for language learning[8]:

Classroom context
Students' proficiency level
Feature Saliency

The first point, classroom context, includes consideration of the following: age, interests and goals, family backgrounds, the type of class that is being taught. This implies that the materials and tasks a teacher brings to the classroom should be appropriate, first, in terms of age, like kid's literature would probably be not interesting for the class of teenagers; second, a family background should also be considered as this can influence the scope of interests of students, like, for example, differences in educational opportunities, and children's learning behavior can make students more or less motivated to study; finally, the type of class, or in other words the objectives and goals put forward for the class influence the choice of materials.

The second point, students' proficiency level, requires the considerations of a student's level of language mastery, that is the scope of vocabulary, flexibility with grammar structures, and

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[5] Morrow, K. (1977). Authentic texts and ESP. In Holden, S. (ed.). *English for specific purposes*. Modern English Publications, Pp 13

[6] Hutchinson, T. & A. Waters (1987). *English for specific purposes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp 159

[7] Tomlinson, B. (2007a): *Language Acquisition and Development – Studies of Learners of First and Other Languages*. London: Continuum.

[8] Duff, A. & Maley, A. (2007). *Literature (2nd ed.)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

ability to distinguish and interpret auditory information. More specifically, if materials are very easy, that is of low level, while students' language proficiency is at an intermediate or advanced level, they soon get bored and demotivated to work with that material. While, in contrast, if the materials are too difficult and contain lots of unfamiliar lexica, the result is almost the same, with the exception of students being annoyed and irritated with the number of unfamiliar words and syntax.

The third aspect, that is feature saliency or in other words "how appropriate are the materials for the class that is being taught?", assumes the consideration of the following points:

The appropriateness of the texts to the language feature being taught: if the lesson aims at developing linguistic competence, that is teach certain vocabulary, for example, food-related, or instruct on the usage of articles, the materials chosen must be abundant in those features for the students to practice. If sociolinguistic or intercultural competencies are sought for, the teacher must select a text that includes references to them.

The level of exposure to a variety of methods, viewpoints, and cultural specifics that the texts provide: the materials a teacher chooses should also provide students with an opportunity to look at things or notions they are familiar with from a different angle. This is important in developing their critical thinking and allows them to explore the world from different points of view, which might be essential in their future path of researchers.

The appropriateness of the length of the chosen material: it is not necessary to read large pieces of materials for a small piece of information. The teacher should be able to extract those sections of the text that are appropriate for the class that is being taught and cut off the parts that bear little educational significance.

Rubdi in his *Static and Dynamic model for choosing authentic materials*[9] suggests the following checklist for the teachers to follow while selecting authentic materials for the classroom:

Pedagogical validity			Psychological validity		
Do the materials expose students to authentic English?	Yes	No	Do the tasks demonstrate the use of language in a communicative, real-world, way?	Yes	No
Is the content realistic, suitable to the topics and events from real-world situations?			Do the tasks require real-world communication?		
Are the teacher's notes clear and useful?			Do the materials make positive contribution to sustain learner motivation?		
Is there enough or too much guidance?			Do the materials give the learners confidence to initiate?		
Are the materials suitable for different teaching styles and personalities?			Are the aims and objectives of the materials clear?		
Is there room for the perspectives and preferences of non-native English teachers?			Do they cater for the needs, wants, interests and purposes of the learners?		

[9] Rubdi, R. (2003). Selection of materials. In Tomlinson, B. (Ed.), *Developing Materials for Language Teaching*. Wiltshire, UK: Cromwell Press, Pp 37-57.

Now that we are clear on the principles of material-selection, the next point concerns the ways of adjusting these materials to the aims and objectives of the lesson as well as the needs and interest of the learners. One of the popular specialists, McGrath , distinguished three types of material adaptation such as *extemporization, extension, and exploitation*[10]. The first point, extemporization, refers to a teacher's response to a vocabulary issue: a difficult word in a text that needs to be replaced to suit the learners' vocabulary range. This is usually done orally in the class in the form of a spontaneous response to the students' inquiry. Extension, in turn, implies the use of further explanations and examples to the problematic points of the text. This can be done in a written form while preparing materials for the lesson, or orally in the process of the lesson. Exploitation, thereby, stands for a teacher's creative ability to design tasks that would adjust the materials to the objectives of the class. This stage makes the original authentic material approachable for the students.

In teaching reading, authentic materials are mainly used to expose learners to the real language. Since authentic materials for such classes are basically extracted from newspapers, magazines or any other reading materials created by native speakers for the native speakers of the language, such texts provide an opportunity to gain the information on the processes, changes and developments around the world. More importantly, such materials reflect the changes of the language, thus, demonstrating to learners the fact that no language is static, but is open to modifications and innovations.

Used literature:

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2. Duff, A. & Maley, A. Literature (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2007
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[10] Lynch, T. (2013). Teaching second language listening, Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp 93