

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AUTHENTIC MATERIAL IN PROMOTING SPOKEN ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT: *Authentic materials are considered to be an essential component in language learning/learning at all levels. Also, it is well known by most of experts, it is an emotive and a debated notion. It reviews the history of using authentic materials, identify the most suitable authentic materials for the learning purposes since it will bring many advantages. This study adopts the descriptive research methodology which is appropriately convenient to describe the topic of research. The use of authentic materials creates a lot of interest and motivation in the learners and they do not feel bored and tired. Authentic materials reduce the dullness of contrived text material. It makes significant contributions towards meeting the learning objective of a programme. The results of this study also expected to illustrate that the integration of authentic materials in verbal English expression has a positive impact on enhancing EFL students' speaking ability. The objectives of the study are to improve speaking skills for secondary school students, motivate them to learn the language and raise their awareness about the usefulness of authentic materials e.g. newspaper articles, weather reports, horoscope, etc.*

KEYWORDS: authenticity; speaking skills; enhancing speaking skill; context

INTRODUCTION

The present study is interested in describing the importance and effectiveness of authentic materials in enhancing spoken English language skills, therefore, the main objective of language learning is to develop speaking proficiency. Nunan (1991) states that, success of mastering language is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the (target) language. It implies that speaking is the indicator of mastering the language which considered as an achievement in acquiring second language. Learners who reached this level in developing skills in their native language are likely to have fewer problems in acquiring those skills in other languages. Teachers accomplish different pedagogical approaches and different teaching methods like behaviouristic, cognitive and communicative during various activities according to the needs of the specific groups of learners. They encourage students to use and access to authentic materials such as cable and satellite TV, radio, available books and

magazines that provide them exposure to the use of authentic language and help them master it.

According to Nunan (1999) authentic materials as spoken or written language data that has been produced in the course of genuine communication, and not specifically written for purposes of language teaching.

Cited in Al-Surmi (The use of authentic materials in ESL/EFL instruction and teaching materials development has been an on-going demand (e.g., Burns, Gollin, & Joyce, 1997; Carter & McCarthy, 1997; Porter & Roberts, 1981; Sherman, 2003). Regarding spoken language, many authors indicate that there are available sources that can provide teachers and learners with authentic spoken materials; one of these sources is television (TV) (e.g., Gebhard, 1996; McCarthy & Carter 1994). Being aware of this source, many teachers and researchers have used different TV programs in their teaching and investigation of effective teaching and learning practices, for example: featured films (e.g., Voller & Widdows, 1993), news (e.g., Morrison, 1989), sitcom (e.g., Washburn, 2001), soap opera (e.g., Grant & Starks, 2001).

Definition of Authentic Materials

The term authentic is originally used to identify any real or natural communication contexts. As Kramsch (1993: 177) points out that authentic refers to everyday language used, it is not intended to academic purposes. The term of authentic materials or authentic texts refers to any 'written or spoken texts' which are commonly not intended to language teaching (Tomlinson, 1998). Similarly, Wallace (1992: 145) defines authentic texts as 'real-life text, not written for pedagogic purposes'. Therefore, these materials are likely not provided or designed for teaching English especially to non-native speakers. They are initially not proposed to foreign learners (Porter and Roberts, 1981: 37; Harmer, 2002:205).

Types of Authentic Materials

Yugandha cited from Marrow opines that "a stretch of real language produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to carry a real message of some sort." Harmer says that authentic texts (either written or spoken) are those which are designed for native speakers: They are real text designed not for language students, but for the speakers of the language in question. Nunan thinks that a rule of thumb for authenticity here is any material which has not been specifically produced for the purposes of language teaching. Based on these definitions, we can find the real meaning of authentic materials: they are real language; produced for the native speakers; designed without the teaching purposes. In this sense, there are a large amount of authentic materials in our life such as newspaper and magazine articles, TV and radio broadcast, daily conversations, meetings, documents, speech, and films. One of the most useful is the Internet. Whereas newspapers and other materials date very quickly, the Internet is continuously updated, more visually stimulating as well as interactive.

Authentic materials in language teaching are classified to use them as per the needs of a particular class. According to Gebhard, authentic materials can be classified into three categories. Authentic Listening-Viewing Materials: TV commercials, quiz shows, cartoons, news clips, comedy shows, movies, soap operas, professionally audio-taped short stories and novels, radio ads, songs, documentaries, and sales pitches. Authentic Visual Materials: Slides, photographs, paintings, children's artwork, stick figure drawings, wordless street signs, silhouettes, pictures from magazine, ink blots, postcard pictures, wordless picture books, stamps, and X-rays.

Authentic Text Materials: Newspaper articles, movie advertisements, lyrics to songs, restaurant menus, street signs, cereal boxes, information brochures, maps, TV guides, comic books, greeting cards, and bus schedules.

The Advantages of Authentic Materials

Authentic materials play an effective role in both the teaching as well as the learning process. In terms of the learning process, they provide EFL learners with a number of aspects such as motivation, authentic cultural background, contact with the real language variety and sufficiency to learners needs. Nevertheless, in terms of the teaching process, they maintain an innovative teaching style. Richards, J. and Rodgers, T. (2001:248), mention the main advantages of using authentic materials are:

1. They have a positive effect on learner motivation.
2. They provide authentic cultural information.
3. They provide exposure to real language.
4. They relate more closely to learners' needs.
5. They support a more creative approach to teaching.

Levels of Using Authentic Materials

Authentic materials are recommended to be used at post-intermediate level because at this level, students are expected to have an extensive collection and variety of vocabulary items in the target language; in addition, they master the different language sentence building patterns. Guariento & Morley (2001:3) claim that: "at post-intermediate level, the use of authentic materials is available for use in classroom. This might be attributed to the fact that at this level, most students master a wide range of vocabulary in the target language and all of the structures."

Authentic materials are not recommended to be used at pre-intermediate levels because they impose an overburden on both teachers and learners. In terms of learners, they might discourage learners who are expected to lack vocabulary and structures. In terms of teachers, they demand many preparations in order to suit the level and ability of learners. Guariento & Morley (ibid) note that:

At lower levels, the use of authentic materials may cause students to feel demotivated and frustrated since they lack many lexical items and structures used in the target language. The use of authentic materials is a burden for the instructors teaching

beginning students, as they have to spend a lot of time to prepare for authentic materials regarding the ability level of the students.

This does not mean that teachers are not able to use authentic materials in lower-level classes apart from post-intermediate and advanced levels. Guariento & Morley (ibid) mention reasons for using authentic materials at the different levels because learners:

1. Enjoy dealing with authentic materials since they enable them to interact with the real language and its use.
2. Do not consider authentic situations or materials innately difficult.
3. Need pedagogical support especially in listening situations and when reading literary texts such as the provision of a full range of cues (auditory and visual including written language).

In order to overcome difficulties that teachers face in using authentic materials, it might be concluded that learners feel better with authentic materials helping them involve in the 'real' language as long as teachers provide them with pedagogical support. In order to achieve this, here is a wide range of choices:

Authentic materials usage which enhance learners understanding, is recommended since it keeps learners interested. Moreover, popular literary authentic materials such as songs are advised to be used since they help at creating a relaxation atmosphere. Matsuta (2004:4) claims:

Using audio-visual materials aiding students' comprehension is beneficial since it will prevent students especially beginning ones from being frustrated about authentic materials. Materials such as popular and traditional songs will help us to create a non-threatening environment.

Authentic materials as well as activities should be used in agreement with learners' abilities. Guariento & Morley (2001:4) state: "authentic materials should be used in accordance with students' ability and suitable tasks can be given to learners in which total understanding is not important."

Non-authentic materials can be used at the beginning levels, considering that materials related to learners own subject areas to be used, then afterwards introducing authentic materials. Jordan. R. R. (1997: 137) reports: "in the earlier stages, non-authentic materials can be used, but stresses that upon students' dealing with materials from their own subject area, authentic materials should be introduced."

CONCLUSION

After going through the related literature, it is obvious that the use of authentic materials in language teaching is supported by many researchers. They regard the use of this type of materials as a useful means to motivate learners, arouse their interest and expose them to real language they will face in the real world. In addition, authentic materials encourage learners to learn a particular language successfully,

because they notice they are dealing with the language in real life. According to Guariento & Morely (2001), authentic materials help to motivate learners learn the language by making them feel they are learning the 'real' language. In addition, Hyland (2003, p. 94) states that one of the most important advantages of using authentic materials, is that it increases learners' motivation and reflects positively on their learning process. Still, some researchers are against the use of authentic materials in the classroom, because they believe that they might be too culturally biased and contain complex words and structure. This might frustrate learners. In spite of this negative view, the advantages of using authentic materials in teaching learners in ESL classrooms, outweigh the disadvantages, and they are still a vital approach which should be adopted by EFL teachers, in order to support their learners' language learning process, as proven by a number of researchers such as (Thanajaro, 2000; Kilickaya, 2004; Otte, 2006). Furthermore, the results of the study carried out by Baniabdelrahman (2006) prove that using authentic materials in teaching English to EFL learners is "more effective than using non-authentic materials". The latter is and will surely be the researchers' conviction of the vital role that such authentic materials have, and will play for an effective, practical learning process that must happen in every teachers' classroom.

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