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Jigagul Kenjebaevna Taspanova

Karakalpak State University
Foreign Language Faculty, acting assistant professor

Gulnaz Jandullaevna Babanazarova

Karakalpak State University
Foreign Language Faculty, assistant

THE IMPORTANCE OF USING AUTHENTIC MATERIALS IN ENGLISH CLASSES

Abstract: This article describes importance of authentic materials in English classes. This article says about advantages and disadvantages of using authentic materials and many scholars have defined the term authentic materials in different ways but every definition has one common characteristic that authentic materials have exposure to real language and its usage in its own community. Authentic materials are mainly for communication among people.

Key words: authentic material, learning, communication, exposure, motivation, non-native speakers, categorize, structure, functions, content.

Language: English

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Introduction

The teaching of English as a foreign language or as a second language exists in all parts of the world. Since English has become an international language more importance is being laid on teaching and learning it effectively. Materials are designed to provide appropriate exposure to the learners and enrich the language learning experience. Authentic materials that are derived from the culture of the target language give positive attitude towards language learning rather than those specially designed for language learning. Nevertheless, in most of the classes students are taught using traditional materials and audio materials that do not prepare them to encounter real life situations. Authentic materials act as a vehicle in bringing the target culture nearer to them. It is worthwhile to know what authentic materials are. Using examples of language that are produced by native speakers for their own purposes and newspaper articles, advertisements, pop songs, strip cartoons are considered to be the authentic materials.

Authentic materials are print, video, and audio materials students encounter in their daily lives, such as change-off address forms, job applications, menus, voice mail messages, radio programs, and videos. Authentic materials are not created specifically to be used in the classroom, but they make excellent learning tools for students precisely because they are authentic. Authentic materials are sometimes called contextualized materials which we come across in daily life. Many scholars have defined the term authentic materials in different ways but every definition has one common characteristic that authentic materials have exposure to real language and its usage in its own community.

Authentic materials are mainly for communication among people [12; 121]. For example, newspapers are for reporting local and international news; VCD and digital versatile disc DVD are for entertainment. It is obvious that authentic materials are used in daily life and not created for the purpose of language teaching. These materials are written for

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real-life communicative needs, in which the writers intend to transfer some messages to the readers.

The use of authentic materials for English language teaching is a topic which has been discussed for many years by experts in the field and teaching professionals. Most teachers have their own opinions about their use and practicality in the classroom. Most of them like the idea of using authentic materials but avoid using them due to the lack of knowledge of how to select an appropriate text (either written or audio), doubt about how they can be exploited and the belief that students may not find the material stimulating or may find it too difficult. Some less experienced teachers may, after an unsuccessful attempt at using material from an authentic source, decide that it is safer and less time consuming to stick to the prescribed course book.

There is no doubt that today English teachers have a lot of choices in terms of teaching materials. Choosing them we are to keep in mind that we should focus students' attention not only on vocabulary and grammar structures but prepare them for real communication where the knowledge of culture is sometimes crucial. Thus the use of authentic materials can help solve this problem. The majority of scholars define authentic materials as materials which are designed for native speakers; they are real texts, designed not for language students, but for the speakers of the language. Furthermore, the use of authentic materials is an important principle of communicative language learning and it contributes to the development of an individual learning style and learner autonomy, also it is effectively. In real life we come across some real situations, so that time using authentic materials is beneficial for us. Basically, authentic materials provide the following benefits:

1. motivation to learning;
2. authentic cultural information;
3. real language presentation;
4. creative approach to teaching

First of all, use of authentic materials is encouraged by many researchers because they are frequently up to date. They have a positive influence on learners; motivation, comprehension and satisfaction. They inspire students to learn language provide cultural information, give exposure to real language and allow a more creative approach to teaching. [2; 312] add that whenever students have self-confidence they will learn a language faster. Scholars confirm that authentic materials contain language data and communication which improve students' communicative skills. They are also channels for communication that deliver messages and meaning to learners [11; 53].

Students not only improve their receptive and productive skills, but using authentic materials also helps them understand linguistic pattern, traditions and culture of other countries. Furthermore, authentic materials can help students bridge the relationship

between the language classroom and the outside world [3; 459]. Video, audio, text and graphics are useful for teachers to facilitate teaching in classrooms [5; 28]. Additionally, using real objects such as coins, tools and plants can generate interest and enthusiasm for learning a topic. [11; 47]. Except that they explain that real materials assist learners to develop better attitudes and increase their motivation to learn. Similarly, teaching techniques, materials and competitive activities influence students to develop their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. These also contribute to students' language acquisition. Authentic materials play an important part in promoting communicative language skills. They can be exploited to assist students to learn and communicate in the target language. Many scholars say that authentic materials are used for positive results in the classroom by showing positive impact on the students' results. On the other hand, some scholars do not agree with the idea of using authentic materials in the classroom. For instance, many studies confirm oral language improvement when authentic material used in practice. But Harmer believes that media do not have any effect on learning in any condition, thus there is no question of authentic and non-authentic materials. In addition to that [7; 148] believes that, even though many course books use non-authentic materials to develop language skills, only authentic material genuinely improves listening and reading skills. Many studies prove that authentic materials improve reading skills of students by introducing students to new vocabulary and expressions.

On the other hand, Kilickaya F. [8; 48-57] claims that authentic texts are random in respect to vocabulary, structure, functions, content and length; thereby causing a burden for the teacher. In addition to that teachers face challenges in the access to authentic materials, the expense of purchasing them, and the time required to find an appropriate authentic text and design suitable pedagogical tasks. He argues that authentic materials may create problems for learners in the form of unknown vocabulary, structures and speed of delivery so he prefers using known simplified texts having communicative value.

Nevertheless, Guariento W[6; 347] suggest that some difficulties can be overcome by designing tasks that require only partial comprehension. But, other scholars prove that learners may experience extreme frustration when confronted by authentic text, especially lower level students.

Moreover, Allan M [1; 49] suggests that incorporating authentic texts and their comprehension help learners to develop writing proficiency in target language. But sometimes such issues create problems for teachers to incorporate authentic materials in the classroom.

McNeil [10; 313] and Kilickays F [8; 57] claim that incorporating authentic materials in foreign language classroom offers more than linguistic

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advantages, they argue for motivating power of authentic materials. Both the scholars believe that the use of authentic material in language teaching motivates learners as it gives learner the feeling that he or she is learning the real language - the language as it is used by the community.

However, some scholars are not in favor of using authentic materials. For instance, Clarke A.[4; 302] believes that authentic materials do not affect learning at all. Many studies have been proved that students' motivation and self-satisfaction increased after exposure to authentic aural texts. To support the idea Kim D[9; 189] argues that authentic materials make a major contribution to overcoming certain cultural barriers to language learning.

Richard J.[13; 304] points out that alongside the advantages in implementing authentic materials, they often consist of difficult and vague language, unnecessary vocabulary items and complex language structures, which cause difficulties for the teacher and learners in lower-level classes. Furthermore, authentic materials may be too culturally biased and difficult to understand outside the language community. Martinez deals with the term authentic materials itself and with advantages and disadvantages of their use as well as possible sources of them. He listed following pluses and minuses:

Advantages:

- Students are exposed to real language
- There is factual acquisition from most of them
- Textbooks do not include inaccurate language
- Authentic materials may be inspirational for some students
- One piece of text may be used for various activities and tasks
- There is a wide choice of styles, genres and formality in authentic texts
- They can motivate students to read for pleasure

Disadvantages:

- Authentic texts may be difficult to understand because of a culture gap
- The vocabulary may be not exactly what the students need
- They are rather difficult for beginners
- Preparation of the texts and activities is often demanding and time consuming
- There are many various accents and dialects in listening

Despite many benefits, authentic materials have limitations, especially for non-native speakers of English. Teachers must be aware of various accents, dialects, slang and regional vernacular that create difficulties in teaching English. Even with these limitations, the benefits of authentic materials in the classroom are well worth researching in greater detail.

Analyzing scholars' views we noticed oppositions in using authentic materials for learning classes. There are a lot of scholars who agree to use authentic materials in the classroom, but other researchers who do not agree with the idea of using authentic materials. As we can see, despite having more benefits, the use of authentic materials for language learning has some negative aspects, and this makes teachers know how and where to use authentic materials.

Considering the advantages and disadvantages of using authentic materials, there come the question of when authentic materials should be introduced and used in a classroom; in other words, can we use authentic materials regardless of our students' level? Materials should be adjusted for the age of learners, otherwise they could be discouraged of the fact that they don't understand the text. For young learners adequate should be some easy poetry or lyrics with gaps since as the English Language Curriculum Guide indicates "Mastery of an authentic text gives learners a strong feeling of achievement and motivates them for further development.

Moreover, teachers could use some posters or advertisements because the language here is very often easy for the learners. When the level of communication skills of learners increases we could try to work with some short article.

Authentic materials refer to texts we encounter in everyday life. They usually demonstrate language in use for some genuine communicative purposes. Our teachers may find it difficult to incorporate authentic materials into the classroom because they are not native speakers of English. In spite of not being native speakers, we think we should know how to use authentic materials and our learners can use authentic materials at intermediate and advanced level.

Furthermore, Guariento[6; 353] point that authentic texts should not be used with lower level students because it would lead to frustration, confusion and de-motivation. Except that some researchers claim that exposure to authentic materials should be in the early stages of language learning McNeil [10; 313] arguing early exposure will help learners develop strategies for more complex tasks later on. Allan [1; 146] studied 1500 high school students in three different language levels using authentic materials.

But other scholars suggest that it would be appropriate to use authentic materials in classroom at post- intermediate level. The fact is that at that level students have mastery over huge number of lexical items and possibly all the structures in the target language. Really, using authentic materials to teach intermediate or pre-intermediate is more easily than beginning level students.

The researchers found that all subjects were able to capture some meaning from all the texts, even at the beginning level. According to these studies, less

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proficient students can benefit from authentic materials.

As was mentioned, authentic materials are used intermediate and post-intermediate levels, because of using that level is more suitable for their skills. So our next paragraph is about types of authentic materials. There are given different types for the authentic materials by different scholars, but they do have something in common.

Researchers have lots of points about authentic materials and divide them into some types and categorizes. For example, Bacon suggests four types of authenticity- authenticity of text, learner, task and classroom. Authentic text stands for authentic qualities of text which means the information should help learners to develop authentic understanding. However authentic learners refer to the ability to interpret the meaning of the text as native speakers do in real world. Authentic task should engage in authentic communication and real usage of the language. Finally, the most important thing that authentic classroom which enables learners to experience the real life atmosphere and share their ideas and problems in public and each other. And, other scholar that Richard[13; 59] divide some categorizes authentic materials.

Gerhard categorized authentic materials into four elements:

1) authentic listening/viewing materials (e.g., TV commercials, movies, news clips, video clips),

2) authentic visual materials (e.g., photographs, magazines, cook books),

3) authentic printed materials (e.g., newspaper articles, advertisements, maps)

4) realia or real world objects (e.g., clocks, phones, dolls).

Additionally, Allan explains that authentic materials can be simply divided into spoken form (e.g., films radio, weather forecasts) and written form (e.g., recipes, articles, application forms).

As we can see authentic auditory materials contains theme of our research paper. Movies or videos are a good example of authentic material that can be used in language teaching in order to make the learning process more entertaining, more enjoyable and possibly even somewhat easier. Movies are designed to appeal directly and fully to people's emotions. Also the aspect of entertainment is strongly present as far as films are concerned. Since the use of movies in language learning has to do with affective factors, it is very important for the teacher to be able to balance between getting the students to become involved in the films while also exploiting the language learning potential of the movies. Thus, using movies as authentic material requires an emphasis on the teaching approach, which should be content- and task based. In addition, also the teachers own attitude towards the films is an important factor in order to be able to treat the films as cultural items instead of mere sources of language input.

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