

**ASPECTS OF TEXT AND TASK AUTHENTICITY****Mamirova Malikaxon Xusravjon qizi**

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6460176>

ABSTRACT: This paper aims to find out how using authentic materials and to distinguish aspects of text in teaching English for improving reading skill at schools. The article includes in choosing effective authentic tasks and texts and to design the lesson productively in the teaching of reading for learners. Thus, using authentic materials, if exploited appropriately, may provide students with several important benefits in different fields of study: linguistics (practice of grammatical structures, phonology helping with pronunciation) semantics (extension of the range of vocabulary, practicing of how meaning is inferred from words and concepts), pragmatics (practicing of how meaning is inferred from context) and cultural studies (life and culture in English speaking countries).

Keywords: Authentic materials, reading text, learner's interest, non-authentic materials, authentic text and task, contextual teaching and learning (CTL)

ANNOTATSIYA: Ushbu maqola maktablarda o'qish mahoratini oshirish uchun ingliz tilini o'rgatishda asl materiallardan qanday foydalanishni va matnning jihatlarini farqlashni o'rganishga qaratilgan. Maqolada o'quvchilarga o'qishni o'rgatishda samarali autentik topshiriqlar va matnlarni tanlash va darsni samarali loyihalash kiradi. Shunday qilib, agar ular to'g'ri qo'llanilsa, haqiqiy materiallardan foydalanish o'quvchilarga turli xil ta'lim sohalarida bir qator muhim afzalliklarni berishi mumkin: tilshunoslik (grammatik tuzilmalar amaliyoti, talaffuzga yordam beradigan fonologiya), semantika (lug'at doirasini kengaytirish, ma'no qanday ekanligini mashq qilish, so'z va tushunchalardan kelib chiqqan holda), pragmatika (kontekstdan qanday ma'no chiqarishni mashq qilish) va madaniyatshunoslik (ingliz tilida so'zlashadigan mamlakatlarda hayot va madaniyat).

Kalit so'zlar: Haqiqiy materiallar, o'qish matni, o'quvchining qiziqishi, haqiqiy bo'lmagan materiallar, haqiqiy matn va topshiriq, kontekstli o'qitish va o'rganish (CTL)



АННОТАЦИЯ: Эта статья направлена на то, чтобы выяснить, как использовать аутентичные материалы и различать аспекты текста при обучении английскому языку для улучшения навыков чтения в школах. Статья включает в себя выбор эффективных аутентичных заданий и текстов и продуктивное оформление урока в обучении чтению учащихся. Таким образом, использование аутентичных материалов, если они используются надлежащим образом, может дать учащимся несколько важных преимуществ в различных областях обучения: лингвистика (практика грамматических структур, фонология, помогающая с произношением) семантика (расширение диапазона словарного запаса, практика понимания значения, выводится из слов и понятий), прагматика (практика выведения значения из контекста) и культурология (жизнь и культура в англоязычных странах).

Ключевые слова: Аутентичные материалы, текст для чтения, интерес учащегося, неаутентичные материалы, аутентичный текст и задание, контекстное преподавание и обучение (CTL)

Reading is very important skill to be mastered because by reading, the students will get much information which is very useful for their life. Widdowson states that reading is the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language through the medium of print. From the explanation above, it can be seen that reading has a power to create a better condition. Bloom and Greene in Bernhard explain, "Reading is used to establish structure and maintain social relationship between and among people" (Related to a phenomenon, reading cannot be separated from the other language skills. It is supported by Brown in his book, Teaching by Principles, "Reading is treated as one of two or more interrelated skills. A course that deals with reading skills, then will also deal with related listening, speaking, and written skills") (1994: 218).

Reading is a complex cognitive process of decoding symbols for the intention of deriving meaning (reading comprehension) and/or constructing meaning. Written information is received by the retina, processed by the primary visual cortex, and interpreted in Wernicke's area. Reading text is now an important way for the general population in many societies to access information and make meaning.



Reading is a means of language acquisition, of communication, and of sharing information and ideas. Although reading printed text is now an important way for the general population to access information, this has not always been the case. With some exceptions, only a small percentage of the population in many countries was considered literate before the Industrial Revolution.

Chodidjah (2007: 2) states that the goal of teaching English in the beginning level is to build students' positive attitude to English language. She suggests that the teachers of English at the beginning level should: (1) encourage the students to love English; (2) lead the students to have self - confidence in using written or oral English; (3) improve students' communicative competence; and (4) make the students understand that English is a tool of international communication. By applying the suggestion it is believed that the students will be much more interested in learning English. In reality, most of the students at junior high school level face some problems related to reading skill. They have difficulties in comprehending reading text, especially related to the understanding of:

- (1) general idea of the text;
- (2) main idea of the text;
- (3) explicitly and implicitly stated information;
- (4) certain word reference;
- (5) the meaning of the words.

One of the causes of the above problems is students' learning interest. Learning interest, as a supporting element of learning, plays a very important role in teaching and learning process. Students with high learning interest usually perform better than those with low learning interest. The students with high learning interest usually work harder than those with low learning interest. They tend to have low learning interest because of some factors. They are:

- (1) the teaching materials are far from their surroundings;
- (2) the teaching materials are monotonous;
- (3) the class is dominated by the teacher;
- (4) the students do not have opportunity to develop their communicative competence.



'Use of authentic materials does not imply that tasks will be authentic [...] it is what trainees or students DO that counts' (Arnold 1991:238). Materials play a fundamental role in the language classroom since they are the means used by the teacher to facilitate learning that occurs both inside and outside the classroom. Authentic materials, that is, materials which have not been designed for teaching purposes, are potential learning tools due to the authenticity of the language and their intimate relation with the communicative language teaching approach (Hall, 1995; Tomlinson, 1998).

Despite the existence of opposing perspectives among scholars with regard to the potential usefulness of authentic materials in the language classroom. As to the role of authentic materials in the language classroom, both Nunan (1988) and Hedge (2000) agree that they are not produced for language teaching purposes and do not have "contrived or simplified language." Thus, newspapers, magazines, videos, or maps are clear examples of authentic materials. Nonetheless, Morrow (1977) goes further and claims that "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" (p. 13). This latter definition certainly complements the concept that language authenticity and authentic materials should be understood within the foreign/second language learning context as any kind of spoken or written act which does not contain any traces or signs of language teaching intervention, and emerges from the producer's own first language, culture, and needs for communication.

Given the understanding and characteristics of authentic materials, different scholars have valued and criticized their use in the foreign/second language classroom. On the one hand, Hedge (2000) claims that authentic materials are appropriate means for students to cope with the authentic language of the real world. Also, Peacock (1997) remarks that authentic materials "may increase learners' levels of on-task behavior, concentration, and involvement in the target activity more than artificial materials" (p. 152). Moreover, Harmer (1994) claims that learners can greatly benefit from authentic materials as these types of input help students improve their language production, acquire the language in an easier manner, and increase their confidence when using the language in real life situations.



On the other hand, Shoomossi and Ketabi (2007) argue that “non-authentic materials are as valuable as authentic materials. Indeed, there are some situations in which authentic materials are useless—especially when the learners’ receptive proficiency is low” (p. 152). This view is shared by Kienbaum et al. (as cited in Al Azri & Al-Rashdi, 2014) since they assert that there are no significant differences in learners’ performance e.g., between learners using authentic materials and others who use traditional materials. Also, Kilickaya (as cited in Al Azri & Al-Rashdi, 2014) believes that using authentic materials with weak learners frustrate and demotivate them because they lack the required skills and vocabulary to deal successfully with the presented text.

In order to overcome these difficulties, Hwang (2005) suggests that when learners are challenged by the complexity of some authentic language features, it is necessary to provide pedagogical support by calling students’ attention to equivalent expressions that are different in syntax or wording/phrasing in the languages that are learned. Hence, since authenticity does not necessarily mean “good,” just as contrivance does not mean “bad” (Clarke, 1989; Cook, 2003; Widdowson, 1979, 2003), this study placed the use of authentic materials as a strategy to complement the use of non-authentic materials, and with the goal of fulfilling the learners’ communicative needs.

Authentic Tasks, Scholars such as Brown and Menasche (as cited in Shoomossi & Ketabi, 2007, p. 152) provide a rather controversial view by noting that “there is probably no such thing as ‘real task authenticity’ since classrooms are, by nature, artificial.” However, Widdowson (as cited in Mishan, 2005, p. 70) claims that “it is the relationship between the learner and the input text, and the learner’s response to it, that should be characterised as authentic, rather than the input text itself.” Thus, in foreign language learning contexts where exposure to the language being learned is scarce, there is an imperative need to implement materials and design tasks which will enable learners to meaningfully and purposefully use the language.

Hence, in order to design authentic tasks which involve learners in situations that emulate natural authentic language use, it is vital to consider the six guidelines proposed by Mishan (2005) with regard to task authenticity:

1. Reflect the original communicative purpose of the text on which they are based.
2. Be appropriate to the text on which they are based.



3. Elicit response to/engagement with the text on which they are based.
4. Approximate real-life tasks.
5. Activate learners' existing knowledge of the target language and culture.
6. Involve purposeful communication between learners.

The research methodology was developed from a mixed study perspective that integrated a quasi-experimental and a descriptive-qualitative research design. According to Hernandez Sampieri, Fernandez-Collado, and Baptista Lucio (2006), the quasi-experimental research design deliberately manipulates, at least, one independent variable in order to observe its effect and relationship with one or two dependent variables. In this particular design, subjects are not assigned to the groups randomly because those groups are already formed before the treatment. This research study intended to analyze the extent to which the implementation of authentic materials and tasks contribute to the enhancement of the communicative competence.

An important factor in choosing authentic text is readability (Nuttal, 1989). Berardo explicates it calls for the text should not be too easy or too difficult for the students (Berardo, 2006). The structure of the authentic text we choose should not be too complex, therefore the text will be comprehensible input for the students. However, if this is difficult to find the most appropriate one, we still can utilize the authentic text that may have difficulty. In this case, we need to give a reasonable task to students. Mishan reasons that it follows that texts can be made accessible to learners not by simplifying these, but by adjusting the demands of the task involving them (Mishan, 2005). The comprehensible authentic text is worthy input in second language acquisition. Mishan states that the argument for the use of authentic texts in language learning may all be reduced to one quint essential point; that their use enhances language acquisition (Mishan, 2005).

Mishan's (2005) approach to designing authentic tasks around authentic materials begins with the consideration of the communicative purpose of a text (Table 1) when the communicative purpose of a text is identified, the teacher can select between the different task types presented in Table 2. As the task type follows the communicative purpose of the text, not all tasks go with all text, for example, the only natural response to an instructional text would be to react to the instructions. The possible authentic tasks that go with a particular communicative purpose of a



text are summarized . The key argument behind the methodology is that the authenticity of tasks can be guaranteed by acknowledging the communicative purpose of the authentic text.

The use of authentic materials in the teaching of reading is benefitting students. Since authentic text is an exposure to real language being used in a real context, it is introducing the students how the language is really used. It is in contrast with artificial text which typically uses controlled language learning environment. In real world, students will not encounter the artificial language of the classroom but language how it is really used. The used of authentic material is also recommended by Widdowson. He stated that It has been traditionally supposed that the language presented to learners should be simplified in some way for easy access and acquisition (Widdowson, 1990). Nowadays, there are recommendations that the language presented should be authentic. Berardo stated that using authentic material is good for the students because it enable learners to interact with the real language and content rather than form. Learners feel that they are learning a target language as it is used outside the classroom (Berardo, 2006).

Teacher must be careful to choose the text. It must be correlated with typical to the students' world (learners' authentic). The topic of authentic text must be suitable to the students' context. This is, then, in line with contextual teaching and learning (CTL), one of the hot topics in education today which is emphasized on the learning should be meaningful for students. Meaning emerges from the relationship between content and its context . Further she stated that context give meaning to content. It means students are able to make connections, the more meaning content will hold for them. A great part of the teacher's job, then, is to provide context. According to Duke et al, they stated that students learn language not in abstract, decontextualized terms but in application, in a context that language is really for. For students, language learning occurs best when the learning context matches the real functional context . In this case, authentic texts should be typical in the students' context. Authentic text which is used in real life will helpful in teaching learning. This will help students to connect he language they learned from the authentic text to their context in real life situation. Johnson states that the more students are able to connect their academic lessons to this context, the more meaning they will derive from these lessons.

However, besides those strengths of authentic texts mentioned above, there are also negative aspects we need to consider. This may cause teacher reluctant to use authentic texts. The



negative aspects of authentic materials according to Martinez (2002) are they can be too culturally biased that required a good knowledge of cultural background, as well as too many structures being mixed, causing lower level problems when decoding the texts. Moreover, according to Berardo, the biggest problem with authentic texts we face 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 (Berardo, 2006). This can de-motivate the students rather than motivate them.

Using authentic texts in second language curricula has become an everyday task for most language teachers. Many of them are now inclined to the incorporation of material recorded in ordinary settings rather than artificially produced texts. However, other professionals still are not convinced about the inclusion of authentic material in second language teaching. They argue that authentic material may be too difficult for beginners to grasp. If the text is modified -they believe- learners can assimilate it better. Thus knowing how to distinguish authentic from non-authentic texts easily is something that all language teachers require. When talking about authenticity one is faced with three types of texts that are commonly used in second language textbooks. First we have the *authentic text*, which is encountered in the target culture. These texts are created by native speakers in authentic contexts where the target language is used to accomplish communicative purposes in their own culture. They are not simplified or modified in any way. They contain the language that those native speakers use naturally in real-life situations to fulfill their social needs.

The second type is the *adapted or simplified text*. This is a modified version of an authentic text. Language is adapted to make it more easily understood by non-native speakers and also to introduce particular grammar or vocabulary. Likewise, some textbook writers, instead of using simplification, decide to create their own readings, dialogues, transcripts, or any other piece of writing or listening comprehension text. Most of these texts have characteristics similar to those of an authentic piece of discourse. This third type, which we will call *creative text*, is based on a content sequence which has been previously graded according to a particular syllabus, and that the author would like to cover in the textbook. These creative texts as well as adapted ones are both considered non-authentic, since they do not meet native speakers' communicative needs in a real-life context.



These last two types of texts may look so natural that often they appear authentic to many people. Even though it may be argued that some of this material has a very high probability of occurring in a natural setting, at this moment little is known to differentiate authentic and non-authentic discourse systematically. In this article detailed criteria will be provided in order to distinguish whether a text is authentic or non-authentic. This will enable language teachers to know what kind of listening and reading material they are using in the classroom. When working with written or aural material in second-language textbooks, teachers always face several problems concerning authenticity of texts. Due to this Geddes and White propose two categories to distinguish between two kinds of discourse: *Unmodified Authentic Discourse* and *Simulated Authentic Discourse*. The first is material designed for native speakers in their own culture and the second is designed for pedagogical purposes. We will be analyzing discourse in written texts according to Geddes and White's categorization.

As mentioned before, using authentic materials, if exploited appropriately, may provide students with several important benefits in different fields of study: linguistics (practice of grammatical structures, phonology helping with pronunciation) semantics (extension of the range of vocabulary, practicing of how meaning is inferred from words and concepts), pragmatics (practicing of how meaning is inferred from context) and cultural studies (life and culture in English speaking countries) (Oura, 2012). Students are exposed to real life situations with real life discourse. Those real life situations are unsolicited, spontaneous, natural and covering a wide spectrum of levels of formality and genres. Such materials can be used several times under different circumstances, each time practicing various aspects of language. Using such materials may positively motivate students in further studying. And last but not least, exposing students to real life language can shorten the distance between the learners and the target language used in reality. The publishing English teacher Daniela Tamo agrees with Heitler by saying:

“Authentic materials keep students informed about what is happening in the world, so they have an intrinsic educational value. As teachers, we are educators working within the school system, so education and general development are part of our responsibilities” (Tamo, 2009)

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