

EXPOSURE TO AUTHENTIC MATERIALS IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract: In Indonesian primary, middle, and high schools, traditional English instruction usually places a strong emphasis on grammar rule-based learning. English produced in classrooms under the test-based education system seems to be unspoken outside of the classroom. Consequently, students find it difficult to acclimate to speaking English with native speakers in the actual world. Connecting with native speakers requires them to continuously modify their language use in areas where appropriate teaching was lacking. By exposing students to real content that is tailored to their interests and level of sensitivity, teachers may help them develop a self-created "English Environment" that help them become more sensitive and proficient in the target language. English teachers should ideally use a variety of authentic materials in addition to English textbooks to stimulate the natural language learning process and enable effective English as a foreign language instruction. Examples of authentic materials include writing, essays, short stories, and song lyrics in realistic language. In light of this, the essay addresses how teachers can utilize authentic materials in EFL lessons to great success as well as how authentic materials can assist students in understanding the true context of English.

Keyword: exposure, authentic materials, English as a foreign language.

INTRODUCTION

The integration of communicative competence into the teaching of English as a foreign language in Indonesia has emphasized the achievement of functional abilities in the target language. In other words, language students have evolved from grammatical contexts to communicative contexts that emphasize understanding and appropriate use of language in communicative situations. The main focus of the English as a foreign language curriculum has shifted from the development of linguistic/grammatical competence to the development of communicative competence needed for real-life communication. Communicative competence is clearly needed in the EFL classroom.

The communicative competence model consists of three main components: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. Grammatical competence refers to knowledge that leads to linguistic mastery. Sociolinguistic competence refers to how well speech is produced and interpreted in various sociolinguistic circumstances. Strategic competence is the mastery of verbal and nonverbal communication

strategies that can be used to compensate for communication breakdowns caused by limiting conditions in actual communication or insufficient competence in one or more other areas of communicative competence, and to increase communication effectiveness.¹ This shows that even language students who understand grammar and word meanings can be hampered in communicating their intended messages due to a lack of communicative competence. Each component functions as a medium of communication. We use the components of communicative competence to communicate ourselves in everyday situations. Language, on the other hand, is more than just a communication tool but also represents social, pragmatic and cultural values.

The use of authentic materials in language teaching is supported by references and a large number of language pedagogy experts. Various similar research results also show that exposure to authentic materials in English as a foreign language classes can be motivating because it shows how language is used in real life by real people, and authentic texts help them become more familiar with the culture of the target language. These authentic resources are used to improve students' communicative skills, so they have the impression that they are learning a real conversational language; not a book language or a classroom language with diverse social, cultural and pragmatic purposes in the language community.

Theoretical Review

There are many teaching materials available to English teachers today: from textbooks to online teaching tools, they can all help and enrich English lessons. Many teachers also introduce authentic English materials into their lessons to expose students to language as it is spoken in the real world.

According to Warschauer (2010), Authentic materials refer to resources that are typically used in language or vocabulary instruction, such as real newspaper stories, real magazine articles, real advertisements, recipes, horoscopes, audio or video that represent real life. That means that authentic materials are any materials written in English that are not created for intentional use in the English classroom. Using this content to teach English can make the process more interesting, imaginative and motivating for students. It can also be useful for eliciting genuine responses from students.

Exposure to authentic materials was popularized in the late 1970s by language experts such as Widdowson and Breen. In that context students and teachers should use authentic resources in the classroom to "simulate" real-world situations. Several scholars supporting the use of authentic materials share a common belief that using authentic materials in the classroom enhances student processing by taking students beyond the confines of the textbook, and opens students' horizons to the real English-speaking world. For this reason, many experts and researchers have come to recommend the use of authentic materials to improve foreign language acquisition. Some linguists argue that anyone who really wants to learn English should be open to the language by using it in everyday life, as all native speakers do. The use of realistic materials in English lessons is very beneficial for this purpose. Real content in English language schools has also received much attention in ELT best practices, and it is a common practice in many countries.

Morton (1999) in his research concluded that non-academic authentic materials can be good reading and writing teaching materials for Academic English Language (EAP) students, especially for those who come from non-native speaker backgrounds who need to learn the rhetorical patterns of academic English. The results of Kim's (2000) study showed positive attitudes as well as improved English language skills of Korean students through exposure to authentic materials in English as a second language courses. Masgoret (2003) in his meta-analysis study analyzing the relationship of second language achievement with five attitude/motivation variables and models also found a correlation between attitude and motivation to learn and exposure to authentic materials in language classes. Sun's (2010) research also shows that motivation can come from teaching materials. Hence he argues that it is very important for teachers to learn how to select or develop appropriate materials for their respective classes.

METHOD

This research is conceptual in nature, using a qualitative descriptive method through a library research approach. This research aims to discuss the importance of exposure to authentic materials in English as a foreign language student in Indonesian classrooms. Therefore, the data is sourced from various scientific writings collected through documentation techniques, identifying concepts and discourses that are relevant and related to the pedagogical discourse of authentic material studies and language students.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Non-Authentic Vs Authentic Materials in The English as A Foreign Language Classroom

Non-authentic teaching materials are prescribed and used in EFL classes specifically prepared by English subject experts to meet the needs of students in general and around the world. Although these teaching materials are prepared by subject matter experts and provide standardized information, they do not always meet the needs and interests of students. It is not uncommon for non-authentic teaching materials to fail to present real-world or situational language to students. Non-authentic materials often dictate to teachers what to teach, while staying in the same circle. The goal of classroom teaching remains largely on textual and grammatical knowledge. Textbook syllabi and board paper patterns are not fully aligned with the curriculum. Texts in books are sometimes unrelated to students' situations. Textbooks often overload students and encourage memorization. Learning through these books makes students passive language learners. These books are not geared towards meeting the verbal needs of the students.

It is in this context that authentic materials become an excellent resource for EFL teachers and provide opportunities for students to unlock real-life contexts and use English in real-life situations. In addition, students develop their language skills tremendously and communicate not only with their peers in the classroom but also with friends, family members and others outside the classroom. English is taught in almost all schools in Indonesia using only textbooks.

In relation to this phenomenon, exposure to and use of authentic materials plays a very important role. Language teachers need to use two types of materials, those that are exclusively prepared for teaching language, such as textbooks and authentic materials that are used for purposes other than teaching but are often used in language classrooms when they teach language. Textbooks can still be used even if their contents provide students with sturdy and monotonous information and fail to present real-world or situational language. But it is also important for language teachers to prepare their own materials that match the needs and interests of the students and also match the prevailing demands of society.

Authentic Resources in The English as A Foreign Language Classroom

Teachers need to provide exposure to authentic materials in English as a foreign language teaching. The sources of authentic materials that can be used as exposures in English as a foreign language classes can be grouped into two categories: print and sound⁸ such as the following examples:

No	Authentic Materials	Authentic Material With Sound
1	Newspaper	Song Lyrics
2	Magazine	Movie
3	Product Label	Radio Broadcast
4	Restaurant Menu	Television Commercials
5	Job Advertisement	Podcast
6	Journal Articles	
7	Blog Posts	
8	Novel	
9	Flyers	

All of the above authentic materials can be used as exposures to integrate the four linguistic skills of interest to students. Some of them have long been available and used in classrooms. If they are too difficult, then teachers can adapt the language by reducing the number of words and complex sentences so that authentic materials can be well understood by students.

Characteristics of Authentic Materials

There are several characteristics of authentic materials that are very beneficial in language teaching and learning that distinguish them from non-authentic materials. For example, they are economical to use in the English classroom, easily accessible to teachers, ubiquitous for students, and generally come with pictures and sounds that interest students.

Benefits of Exposure to Authentic Materials in English as A Foreign Language Classes

The main benefit of authentic materials is that teachers can choose them according to students' needs and interests to engage them in learning English using real-life situations as well as developing English skills and demonstrating them inside and outside the classroom. In fact, using authentic materials in the EFL classroom has more benefits and teachers who decide to use these materials should be aware of these advantages and take advantage of them to improve their language teaching and their students' language learning. The advantages are as follows:

1. Reduce students' learning difficulties related to contextualized speech.
2. Equipping students with situational language.
3. Exposing students to real life situations.
4. Develop students' social language skills.
5. Develops students' ability to learn and interpret the topics they learn.
6. Improves students' critical thinking.
7. Develops student and teacher creativity.
8. Provides students with an awareness of how to interact with various social situations.
9. Promotes learner concentration on language skills.
10. Motivates students to read as an enjoyable activity.
11. Promotes average students to perform well and is especially useful for low-achieving students.
12. Improves students' ability to have opinions and conversations.
13. Generates a sense of achievement among students.
14. Offers a variety of language contexts, registers, genres and styles of written and oral discourse.
15. Builds connections between the outside world and the English classroom.
16. Promotes students to take part in class discussions actively.
17. Assist in contextualizing the language and using it actively.
18. Increases students' motivation in learning the language.
19. Develops students' analytical as well as reasoning skills.
20. Encourages students to take part and perform well in the tasks given in class.

Challenges of Exposing Authentic Materials in English as A Foreign Language Classroom

Despite their various advantages, authentic materials often contain difficult language, unnecessary vocabulary items and complicated language structures, which cause a burden for teachers. In addition, authentic materials may be too culturally biased. Hence, there are several challenges that should be considered in the exposure of authentic materials in the English as a foreign language classroom.

The grading of different parts of the text may differ. This can especially be a problem with poetically written novels and magazine articles, where the descriptive introduction is often several levels higher than the story once the plot and/or dialog begins. The same applies to newspaper headlines. Approaches include giving difficult passages in summary form and using only extracts from the original text, or doing activities with only easy pieces such as text or dialog.

The difficulty can put people off reading. For some people, the challenge and achievement of reaching the end of an authentic text for the first time is just the motivational boost they need, even if they then don't touch another authentic text until they have made it to a more advanced level. However, for others, the struggle of dealing with authentic texts can only convince them that reading in English never be worth the effort. The most common response to this from teachers and teachers' books is to give students simple general comprehension and skimming and scanning tasks, and to skip detailed comprehension tasks. This can work and give students a sense of achievement, but some students can feel it is just counter-work to make them think they have understood when they haven't really, especially if the teacher tries this trick several times.

No matter how easy an authentic text you manage to find, it is unlikely that every word in it is one of the "most used words in the English language" listed in the learner's dictionary. This is especially the case with children's books, which can be easy and fun for adults to read but often have vocabulary more suitable for under-10s, and where the least useful words are often the most repeated. This can be another good opportunity for students to test their guessed vocabulary from context skills. Alternatively, you can provide a glossary for words that you don't expect them to know at that level but are essential to understanding a particular text, something that is sometimes provided with graded readers and even test readings. Another technique is to underline words that may be new to them that the teacher finds useful, so that when they are busy with their dictionaries in class or at home, the teacher knows they somewhat guided in what they are learning.

Authentic texts are usually too high in difficulty. Assuming there are some students whose level is so high that any assessment would make the text too easy (and even then it should be possible to rewrite it so that there is more useful or even more challenging language in it), if you take a text written for native speakers and try to match it by language level to a selection of articles from an EFL language textbook, you almost always end up with it in the Proficient (i.e. very Advanced) level. However, there are exceptions, including freebie newspapers like Metro, newspapers from non-English speaking countries, some websites (again especially those from non-English speaking countries), specialist texts in the student's area of expertise, some instruction manuals, some notices and road signs, some pamphlets and leaflets, and some articles from Reader's Digest.

In addition, there may be language and cultural references that even native speakers from other countries, regions or age groups do not understand. This can be a big problem if the teacher doesn't understand either. Ways of avoiding this include using English-language texts from the country where the students are from; using texts about something the teacher knows one or more students are interested in and knowledgeable about such as one of their hobbies; and using websites, newspapers, and magazines that have an international readership. This may include languages that are not in the dictionary. This can be a good time for students to practice the skill of "guessing meaning from context", but that is usually only possible if they understand more than 90% of the language around that word. This means that they need to be Advanced

or even Proficiency Level to be able to do that with most authentic texts. As with the point above, there are several good ways to use this factor and the best thing to do is to almost always try to avoid it by choosing a more suitable text, rewriting it, or concentrating on another aspect of the text the teacher has chosen.

Finally, authentic material texts are often too long. One solution with authentic texts is to use only extracts, but this can make comprehension more difficult unless the teacher can find some way of explaining very clearly what comes before or after the section that the teacher gives them. There are also shorter news articles in the margins of newspapers and on the Internet, but these rarely have the engaging storylines and language that should be the selling point of authentic texts.

CONCLUSIONS

Through various research findings on authentic material exposure in English as a foreign language classrooms teachers can design effective authentic material-based teaching by addressing and minimizing the challenges students may face. In this way teachers can create a desire to learn and all students participate in the lesson clearly and voluntarily. It can also be concluded that authentic materials are tools that can improve attitudes and increase motivation in the EFL classroom provided they are used effectively by both teachers and students.

This article provides support for previous findings that show the advantages of exposure to authentic materials in enhancing the learning of English as a foreign language. Finally, the ultimate goal of English language teaching is to enable learners to communicate effectively to use the language appropriately. To achieve this goal, teachers need to bring the outside world into the classroom, not to idealize it comfortably from within. Further research might use English proficiency tests to determine learners' proficiency levels before the study takes place. In addition, experimental studies can also be conducted where the effect of authentic materials on learners' language proficiency.

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