

AUTHENTIC MATERIALS FOR TEACHING WRITING: A CRITICAL LOOK

Rashidova G. I.

Teacher, Uzbekistan World Languages University

E-mail: rashidovagulshoda@gmail.com

Abstract

Teaching writing is hard work. Selecting materials that are suitable for their pupils can be a challenge for writing instructors. The following subjects will be explained in this article: 1) Previous research on the topic; 2) the types of authentic materials that can be used to teach writing; 3) the advantages and disadvantages of doing so; and 4) the theoretical relationship between content-based instruction and authentic materials that language teachers can use to teach writing in the classroom. A qualitative research methodology was utilized, concentrating on content analysis. Documentation and human instruments were the main tools used.

Keywords: authentic material, challenge, content-based, instruction, writing.

Introduction

The use of instructional materials is essential while teaching languages since it helps the teacher to meet the learning objectives. Most Indonesian educators would like to use textbooks to instruct their students. Textbooks play a vital role in a program's structure and syllabus, effectiveness, provision of instructional standards, diversity of learning resources, and quality maintenance, to name just a few (Richards, 2001). However, textbooks have a number of disadvantages in addition to their advantages. Textbooks are not real in terms of language use, content, or student demands, among other areas. Additionally, they make it more difficult for educators to create their own lesson plans (Richards, 2001). While this does not imply that textbooks should not be used in language classrooms, it does convey the idea that developing realistic and student-centered learning resources is vital.

The author's proficiency with the language and its usage, the materials' intended audience, and the activities that go along with it are all crucial prerequisites for creating and producing educational resources for language acquisition (Richards, 2006). When teaching writing in an Indonesian context, it can be difficult to locate appropriate instructional resources. Composing is a talent that calls for both verbal proficiency and the ability to put ideas on paper practically. Writing is a difficult skill in and of itself, let alone imparting it to others. Writing instructors and lecturers frequently struggle with choosing topics for writing assignments (Setyowati, Sukmawa, & Latief, 2018). They continue by saying that if the writing assignment's topic was dull, students would not have anything to write about on their

papers. Some of the answers to this problem will therefore probably involve presenting challenging issues to the students and selecting materials that are as applicable to their everyday lives as is practical. It is customary to use real materials in language classrooms. According to Gilmore (2007), it was first used to teach languages 100 years ago. Therefore, the term "authentic material" is not new. However, there may be disagreements among persons over definitions. The term "authentic materials" is not universally defined. According to Peacock (1997), authentic resources are ones that aren't made with language learning as their main objective in mind. However, authentic materials, according to Tamo (2009), involve the natural use of the language for communication in a setting where native speakers are present. Kilickaya (2004) argues that authentic materials are those that are naturally spoken or written for communication, taking into account the specific context of the local speaker. Gilmore (2007), on the other hand, claims that authenticity can be found in the communicative act's intentions, the participants, the text, or social and cultural communication. Gilmore (2007) thus asserts that the concept of authentic materials is contingent upon the text's source and production context. This essay aims to explain the following topics: 1) the theoretical relationship between content-based instruction and authentic materials that language teachers can use to teach writing in the classroom; 2) prior research on authentic materials used to teach writing; 3) the kinds of authentic materials that can be used to teach writing; and 4) the benefits and drawbacks of doing so.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative methodology with a content analysis design focus. Given that the primary goal of the study is to perform library research on the kinds of real materials suited for higher education—more precisely, senior high school and university levels—the content analysis design is deemed appropriate. Reading online research reports, theses, dissertations, and other pertinent documents was how the library research was carried out. The primary tools utilized were human instruments and documentation. The data was gathered over the course of four months, from February to May 2019, using a number of procedures, including locating articles or research reports related to real materials for writing instruction, reading and understanding the reports, categorizing the data, and drawing conclusions. In order to determine what and how authentic resources were provided in a classroom setting for writing instruction, the researcher concentrated on the methods of earlier studies. Type of Authentic Materials for Teaching Writing R Studies have indicated that the use of technology in the classroom is unavoidable in the twenty-first century. The availability of The internet is affordable and simple. A smartphone and a tablet are plenty to browse the internet with. A large PC or computer is not necessary. As a result, educators who have easy access to the internet and electricity tend to use technology to support their teaching objectives. For the sake of accessibility, some printed educational materials are still utilized in classrooms today. Research indicates that teachers have access to a wide range of resources for teaching writing. Print resources include fictions (Setyowati

& Sukmawan, 2018), image series (Styati, 2016), and webpages (Sundana, 2018) that are accessible over the internet.

The authentic resources fall into three main categories when it comes to their mode of transmission: printed, auditory, and visual (Maroko, 2010). Moreover, Sundana (2018) adduces that articles from newspapers, periodicals, and the internet can also be considered authentic materials. According to Benavent & Penamaria (2011), given how far technology has come in recent years, educators now frequently use the real resources that are available online. Therefore, it can be said that there are essentially two major categories of real materials for teaching writing: printed materials and web-based materials. Printed periodicals, newspapers, invitations, letters, printed literary works (such as anthologies of short stories, novels, poems, and plays), and other printed texts or documents are examples of printed materials. Digital or web-based resources, including images, videos, You Tube clips, electronic books, novels, poetry, short tales, and web applications like booksie.com, storybird.com, and many more, constitute the second category of authentic materials. According to studies by Crossley et al. (2007), the syntactical nature of authentic materials sophisticated and infrequently occurring terms in the texts. When pupils have enough practice, authentic materials can be more beneficial for language learners than simplified or manufactured ones. In a similar vein, Tomlinson (2012) lists the qualities of the best resources for English language teaching (ELT). ELT materials ought to include, among other things, real language usage with real input characteristics. He contends that using real things aids in pupils' efficient language acquisition. As a result, he thinks it is not need to simplify the authentic texts for educational reasons.

Motivating

When incorporated into the classroom, authentic materials are supposed to be engaging and inspiring. It's similar to introducing the outside world inside the classroom. Day (2004) refers to this as the "affect" cause. Teachers, presenters, and researchers who have employed authentic materials frequently attest to their engaging, motivating, and fascinating nature. Authentic resources equip pupils for life beyond the classroom, which is the second common reason. Because it offers authentic language, authentic culture, and a range of genres utilized by the professional world, it inspires students (Benavent & Penamaria, 2011). It is true that using real materials to acquire a target language motivates language learners who are not native speakers. The use of authentic materials minimizes the bridge between the real world (what students find outside the classroom) and the artificial world (what they study in the classroom), as it eliminates exposure to the target language. The usage of short stories is one instance of authentic materials that can be used in language instruction. Since short tales may be used to teach all four skills at once, using them in the language classroom is like hitting two birds with one stone. time, listening, reading, speaking and writing (Erkaya, 2005). The use of Carefully selected short stories can provide motivational benefits to students by piqueing their interest in the plot, culture, and morality of the story.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are teachers who may be curious about the relationship between authentic resources and content-based instruction. However, before examining the theoretical link, it would be beneficial to comprehend what authentic materials are in order to make the connection between content-based guidance and real materials, if any. First of all, there hasn't been a clear agreement reached up to this point over what constitutes authentic materials. As was previously mentioned, scholars disagree on what constitutes authentic materials. "ordinary texts not produced specifically for language teaching purposes (Tomlinson, 2001: 68)

1. "real language, produced by real speakers or writers for real audiences and designed to convey real messages of some sort" (Maroko, 2010:5)
2. "authentic materials are materials that we can use with the students in the classroom and that have not been changed in any way for ESL students" (Tamo, 2009: 75)
3. "exposure to real language and its use in its own community". (Kilickaya, 2004)
4. "a text is authentic or not (within these terms) by referring to the source of the discourse and the context of its production" (Gilmore, 2007)

According to the definitions, three crucial terms—natural, in context, and native speaker—can be utilized to interpret the meaning of authentic materials. Authentic materials are defined as language used by a native speaker in context, whether in written or oral communication, when these keywords are integrated and interpreted..

Upon grasping the meaning of authentic materials, one may wonder what kind of training may make use of them, given the necessity of giving pupils things that have a connection to the outside world. According to Shih (2006), it's necessary to implement teaching strategies that foster research, critical thinking, and writing abilities for academic writing that emphasize writing from firsthand experience through content-based instruction. The communicative approach, which is used in the teaching of second and foreign languages, is characterized by content-based instruction (Leaver & Stryker, 1989). Using real resources for training is one of the most crucial aspects of content-based education (Leaver & Stryker, 1989). According to Moglen (2014), authentic materials showcase real-world themes and provide language in realistic contexts. In conclusion, genuine materials are used in education because content-based learning necessitates authenticity. It follows that a difficult writing assignment for pupils can originate from everyday texts or readings about the actual world that connect to their own experiences.

Previous Studies on Authentic Materials

Numerous scholars, educators, and practitioners have focused their attention on the use of authentic resources in language instruction. Researchers and language learning theorists have long debated whether to utilize artificial/simplified materials or real resources in language classrooms (Crossley, Louwse, McCarthy, & McNamara, 2007). These academics offer justifications and proof to determine which resources, when viewed from a linguistic

perspective, are advantageous for language learners. Crossley et al. (2007) examine the linguistic structure variations between selected actual reading texts and sampling simplified texts from seven ESL textbooks using the Coh-Metrix computational tool. The computational tool Coh-Metrix was then used to examine seven language metrics. These include density of key parts, causal cohesiveness, connectives and logical operators, and polysemy and hypernymy. Their study's findings demonstrate that genuine texts possess superior ability to illustrate the connection between cause-and-effect comprehension, to formulate concepts and storylines, to use a wider range of lexical items and syntactical structures naturally, and to employ a higher proportion of low-frequency and abstract terms. On the other hand, artificial texts, also known as simplified texts, have strong coherence, concise and unnatural language, high frequency words that speed up reading, excessive use of noun phrases and qualifiers, simpler structures, and short, unnatural grammar. Ultimately, the researchers draw the conclusion that while authentic materials benefit intermediate or advanced learners more due to their use of more natural language due to syntactical complexity and low-frequency words, simplified/artificial materials benefit beginners more because the texts use more repetitions and high-frequency words that aid in comprehension. According to Crossley et al. (2007), if given the choice, authentic resources should be used in the classroom rather than simplified ones that exclude beginning pupils. Authentic resources are advantageous for both teachers and pupils, according to a body of research (Azri, Al-Rashdi, Hamed, Azri, & Al-Rashdi, 2014). The use of real materials in writing instruction within the Indonesian setting has been thoroughly studied. First, Styati (2016) looked into how authentic resources affected students' ability to write paragraphs. Her research focused on second semester English department students at a Madiun, Indonesia College of Teacher Training and Education. She employed photo series and movies from You Tube as real materials in her research. She discovered that using a quasi-experimental methodology, photographs worked better than You Tube videos to help pupils become better writers. Sundana (2018) conducted additional experimental research. He looked into how successful real materials for teaching writing in university level. He separated the class into two groups: the control group and the experimental group. While the control group did not receive any actual materials for producing descriptive texts, the experimental group's pupils did receive materials from the internet, specifically from Readers' Digest Magazines, <http://www.imdb.com>, and <https://www.booksie.com>. The findings of his research demonstrate that using real materials has been shown to help pupils become more proficient descriptive text writers.

Second, Arifa (2018) also carried out an experimental study to determine the impact of authentic materials on students' proficiency in senior high school process text writing. She observed two classrooms of thirty pupils each, comprising the tenth year of an Islamic State high school in Palangkaraya, Indonesia. While the control group received instruction using non-genuine materials, the experimental group was instructed utilizing authentic items in the process document. As opposed to the control group, the study's findings indicate that

the experimental group performs better while creating process texts. It was determined that using real content helps students become more proficient at creating procedural texts. Thirdly, using a content analysis design, Setyowati & Sukmawan (2018) carried out a qualitative study examining the utilization of real resources for essay writing. The students were required to assess the fundamental components of the short stories they read in a four-paragraph essay as part of their studies. The study's findings demonstrate that students' consensus is that writing essays with prose analysis improves both their writing and their comprehension of the narrative. During analysis, they pick up skills in both writing (such as creating an introduction and thesis statement) and literature.

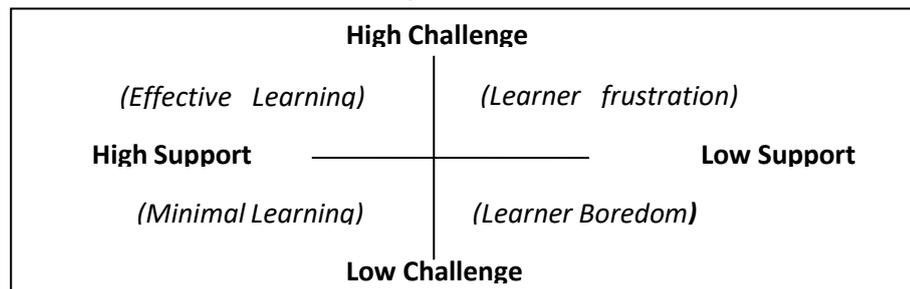


Figure 1. Language classroom learning Consequences of variance support and challenge (Gilmore, 2007)

The implications of differences in task difficulty and text for the learners are depicted in Figure 1. Learning would be successful if both the text and the task design were manageable for the students. However, if both the text and the task design were too challenging, the students may become frustrated, which would lead to ineffective learning. The significance of offering educational resources that both challenge and assist students in completing the assignment is illustrated in Figure 1. Regarding the authentic materials, it can be understood that the language instructor, and more especially the writing instructor, should take into account the appropriate authentic materials for writing instruction. These materials should be appropriate for the students in terms of difficulty level and suitability, offering them challenge as well as support for instruction in writing.

Discussion on the Use of Authentic Materials for Teaching Writing

It is greatly valued when real materials are used in the classroom. This gave rise to the widespread belief that simplified or non-authentic materials are "bad" (Day, 2004). However, there are never enough issues when it comes to using actual materials in the classroom, regardless of how much we respect them. According to Richards (2006), it is impractical to include genuine materials into instructional materials. In a compelling argument, he goes so far as to call real materials a "myth" (Richards, 2006;11). One of the most notable challenges is determining the proper degree of instruction for language impairments, which leads to the appropriateness issue.

Language Problems

There are others who contend that using real resources in the classroom makes language learners' learning more engaging and inspiring. Nevertheless, other research reveals different results. Peacock (1997) carried out research to determine the relationship between students' motivation and authentic materials. He employed beginning EFL students and employed self-report questionnaires and observation sheets as his research tools. In his investigation, he discovered an intriguing finding: students felt that synthetic materials were more fascinating than real ones.

It is true that real language use and context are provided by authentic sources, both spoken and written. But choosing and utilizing it can present challenges for educators (Khaniya, 2010). As Richard (in Khaniya, 2010) said As stated by Richard (in Khaniya, 2010) genuine materials frequently written in a vocabulary and grammatical structure that are challenging. Other experts bolster this case even further. Day (2004) makes the case that there are two issues with employing real materials for language instruction: comprehension and appropriateness. Day (2004) argues that the variety of the target language, task, activity, and exercise suitability, as well as the appropriateness of the language, are the most significant issues with authentic materials. He makes a solid case that the idea of appropriateness should be taken into account before using actual materials in the classroom.

“For What Level” Problems

The next concern that frequently comes up in regards to the usage of real resources in the classroom is for what level of students, given the language difficulties that teachers frequently run into while using them. According to Richards (2006), it's not always essential to use real items as instructional aids. It is predicated on his claims about locating and choosing real things appropriate for beginning or poor learners. These characteristics, according to the research done by Crossley et al., are what give genuine materials their natural appearance. (2007) regarding the linguistic features that distinguish authentic materials from simplified materials, it was discovered that the syntactical complexity and low-frequency words present in authentic materials make them unsuitable for beginning level students, despite the fact that these characteristics are what give authentic materials their natural feel. They contend that simplified materials—which are frequently present in textbooks—benefit beginners more since they employ a lot of repetition and high-frequency vocabulary to aid with comprehension. In a similar vein, Khaniya (2010) contends that authentic materials might not be appropriate for kids at a lower academic level. Lower level pupils may experience discouragement and demotivation due to inadequate acquisition of language skills. They go on to say that pupils at an intermediate level are best suited for using authentic resources. This is justified by the claim that intermediate students have learned enough vocabulary and syntactical components of the language of instruction. A similar view is expressed by Beresova (2015) as well. According to her, advanced students are most suited for authentic content.

Perhaps the following question will then arise. Does this imply that kids at lower academic levels are unable to use real materials? It depends, is the response to this query. It depends on the kind of real materials that are provided to students at a lower level. According to Khaniya (2010), it is preferable to provide authentic resources in the form of well-known and traditional songs to lower-level students since they create a less intimidating environment. Unfortunately, the terms "beginner" and "low level" of pupils are not well defined by these researchers (Crossley et al., 2007; Guariento & Morley, 2001; Khaniya, 2010). The meaning of these words is relative because a student who can only spell and write a word is at the same level as a kid who is just learning how to write a basic sentence. To put it briefly, pupils at the low level do not typically benefit from authentic reading texts, whereas those at the intermediate and high intermediate levels do.

CONCLUSION

There is a place for using real materials in language classrooms. When utilized in the classroom, authentic materials have certain drawbacks, but overall, the benefits exceed these drawbacks. It is true that employing real resources in the classroom particularly when teaching writing offers obstacles for the instructor to locate, pick, prepare, and create activities that correspond with the learning goals. Indeed, it's not simple. However, this shouldn't deter educators from trying. Teachers are advised to incorporate real resources in the language classroom wherever possible, keeping in mind the issue of appropriateness level as pupils steadily improve their language proficiency. The pupils' capacity to think critically and to acquire the language would both improve with the usage of authentic materials. A few recommendations are made for upcoming researchers. The usefulness of using real resources to teach writing at the university level requires more investigation. Further data must be obtained regarding the kind of authentic materials that provide learners with greater writing achievement once the effectiveness of authentic materials compared to textbook materials is sufficiently established. To determine whether the use of real materials in language classes reveals variations across gender and language proficiency, more research must be done. In summary, language teachers should try to understand as much as they can about the use of real resources for language acquisition, both in contexts involving first and second languages. Ultimately, the ultimate aim of education is to enable learners to effectively navigate society and practical situations, enabling them to become valuable contributors to society.

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