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Materials and authenticity in language teaching

Abstract

This chapter begins by providing a brief history of authenticity in language learning and outlines some of the reasons for its growing importance in the field including: (i) a greater focus on communicative competences in ELT; (ii) technological developments in tape/video recording which have spawned new fields of enquiry such as discourse or conversational analysis, providing deeper insights into real-time oral interaction; (iii) advances in information and communications technology (ICT) which have provided materials designers, language teachers and learners with easy access to authentic input from across the globe. It then explores the tangled web of meanings around this multidimensional concept, describing seven definitions of authenticity which exist in the ELT literature and their implications for language teaching and teacher training. Finally, sample materials are provided to illustrate how *some* of the principles of authenticity highlighted in the chapter can be realized in a genuine classroom context. They show how multimodal authentic materials often provide a richer source of input than conventional textbooks, which allows learners to ‘notice’ (e.g. Schmidt 1990) different L2 features, depending on their own particular stage of interlanguage development or interests, and to develop a wider range of communicative competencies.

Biographical Note

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 A brief history of authenticity in language learning

The notion of authenticity has a long history in language teaching, starting as early as the nineteenth century when Henry Sweet, one of the first linguists, criticized the ‘incessant repetition’ of artificial systems, and compared them unfavourably to natural texts which ‘do justice to every feature of the language’ (Sweet 1899: 177).

However, it was probably the ‘communicative turn’ in the 1970s that marked the most significant change in language teaching methodology, as the emphasis shifted from abstract grammatical rules to actual, contextualised performance and the development of learners’ overall communicative competence (Hymes 1972). No longer was it considered sufficient to simply contrive random, isolated sentences to exemplify form or model substitution drills. Initiatives like the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) sought to describe the different communicative needs of European citizens, using real communication tasks to promote interaction amongst its member states. Meanwhile, the development of the tape recorder allowed researchers to begin transcribing and analysing natural speech, spawning new fields of enquiry such as discourse and conversational analysis and providing insights into real-time interaction that then began finding their way into language textbooks (Gilmore 2015). *Advanced Conversational English* (Crystal & Davy 1975: v), innovative in its time, notes in the preface, for example:

‘Recent concern with the nature of discourse has called further into question the oral dialogues of many ELT textbooks which, because of their sentence-structure illustrating task and a lack of ready-to-hand criteria for the treatment of actual speech, have borne little resemblance to the

hesitations, false starts, speed and volume changing characteristics of everyday conversation. As a result, learners have been handicapped in their powers of interpretation of *real* spoken data’.

Today, advances in information and communications technology (ICT) provide materials designers, language teachers and learners with unfettered access to authentic input from across the globe, ‘impelling the issue of authenticity of texts and interactions to the fore in language pedagogy’ (Mishan 2005: ix). The rich variety of multimodal media available on the Web can also effectively illustrate how different semiotic modes (text, images, gestures, sound, movement, etc.) are exploited, in various combinations, to communicate, which can facilitate the development of a range of competencies in language learners (linguistic, pragmalinguistic, sociopragmatic, strategic or discourse – see Fig 1).

1.2 Authenticity and teacher training

Given the prominence of concepts of authenticity in the ELT research literature and the widespread use of authentic materials in language textbooks and classrooms, this is an area well worth focusing on in both initial teacher training and in-service courses. Key areas to consider in any discussions with teachers include: (i) A critical analysis of what authenticity in language learning actually *means*; (ii) What kinds of authenticity we most value in the classroom; (iii) Selecting authentic materials for the classroom; (iv) Ways to effectively exploit the rich potential of authentic materials. These topics will be addressed in the remainder of this chapter.

2 WHAT IS AUTHENTICITY?

The wide variation in definitions of authenticity that exist in the ELT research literature ‘reflect both its significance and ambiguity’ (Trabelsi 2014: 670).

Authenticity is a multi-dimensional concept and its various manifestations all have important implications for L2 materials design and language classrooms. It is therefore a valuable exercise in teacher training courses for teacher-learners (TLs) to attempt to tease apart and make sense of the tangled web of meanings for the term:

Authenticity relates to...

1. Language produced by native speakers (NSs) for native speakers (e.g. Porter & Roberts 1981)
2. Language produced by a real speaker/writer for a real audience, conveying a real message (e.g. Morrow 1977)
3. The ability to think or behave like a target language group in order to be recognized or validated by them (e.g. Kramsch 1993)
4. The types of task chosen (e.g. Guariento & Morley 2001; Mishan 2010)
5. Language assessment (e.g. Bachman & Palmer 1996; Lewkowicz 2000)
6. The qualities bestowed on a text by a reader/listener in a process of ‘authentication’ (e.g. Widdowson 1978; Breen 1985)
7. A personal process of engagement between teachers and students in the classroom (e.g. van Lier 1996)

Whereas the final two definitions of authenticity above focus more on the social reality *inside* the classroom, the first five definitions each tend to project *outside* of the classroom, focusing on the kinds of target discourse communities that learners are

likely to want to operate in and the language or communicative competencies they may need to be successful in their imagined future lives.

2.1 Authenticity as the language of ‘native speakers’

Definition 1 may seem rather outdated now in a world that recognizes the importance of English as an International Language (EIL) and values varieties of English from Kachru’s (1985) inner, outer and expanding circles. With the spread of the English language across the world, it has naturally evolved into a multitude of dialects which vary in terms of pronunciation, intonation patterns, grammar, vocabulary, spelling and conventions of use so that ‘it becomes ever more difficult to characterize in ways that support the fiction of a simple, single language’ (Stevens 1980: 79). However, ‘native speaker’ (i.e. British, American or Australasian) varieties of English still tend to predominate in internationally marketed textbooks and language teachers and their students around the globe continue to display a preference for inner circle, ‘standard’ forms (e.g. Mishan & Timmis 2015: 38). NS discourse (as well as authentic NNS discourse) also offers a rich and readily accessible source of multimodal language input for teachers to exploit in the classroom, which can extend lessons beyond the (necessarily) rather bland and restricted content of many course books. Of course, it isn’t inherently more interesting than any other source of L2 input though; indeed, it is more likely to be culturally opaque and difficult for learners to ‘authenticate’ and so will require care in terms of text selection and task design. Teacher trainers and TLs can usefully consider questions such as: (i) What varieties of English are most appropriate for target learners in a particular context and why? (ii) What are the advantages/disadvantages of selecting inner-circle varieties of English over ‘local’ varieties such as Singlish (Singapore English), or indeed proficient L2 speaker models from the learners’ own culture (which may represent a more achievable goal)? (iii)

How can NS English input be made accessible to learners through principled text selection and task design?

2.2 Authenticity as language conveying a ‘real message’

Definition 2 prioritizes the fact that language models, as a minimum requirement, should come from a genuine communicative event as opposed to being something deliberately created for the purposes of language teaching. Presumably, this stems from a concern that contrived language models often present learners with distorted or partial representations of the L2 for a wide range of discourse features including, lexicogrammatical choices, interactional features of contingent talk, pragmatics and generic structure (Gilmore 2015). In this sense of authenticity, ‘proficient users’ (Paikeday 1985) of English are valued equally to NSs, and in fact may be seen as providing better language models for the classroom (e.g. Cook 1999) since: (i) they represent a more achievable goal for learners to aim at; (ii) the ‘linguistic accommodation’ (adjustment of verbal or non-verbal communication style according to other participants), often seen when interlocutors from different cultures interact, might result in more comprehensible input; and (iii) if the participants are from the learners’ own culture, the topical content might be more accessible, relevant or interesting. In addition to the questions considered in 2.1, it would be useful on teacher training courses to compare language models from course books with authentic interaction, to examine if/how they differ and what effects any differences might have on language learning (e.g. Gilmore 2004).

2.3 Authenticity as intercultural communicative competence (ICC)

Definition 3 focuses on the concept of *communicative competence*, or a speaker's ability to communicate effectively in a variety of social situations. It is often seen as being composed of five distinct areas of linguistic or social competence, shown in Figure 1. However, this has been criticized for overemphasizing a native speaker model of effective communication when the communicative needs of non-native speakers are often very different. Byram & Fleming (1998: 12) proposed that what language learners actually need is intercultural communicative competence (ICC), which they describe as 'the acquisition of abilities to understand different modes of thinking and living, as they are embodied in the language to be learnt, and to reconcile or mediate between different modes present in any specific interaction'. Rather than teaching the language stripped of its cultural associations, this approach recognizes the importance of 'cultural authenticity' and helping students see the world from different perspectives so that they are better equipped to mediate between their own culture and that of the target community. It moves beyond language to consider aspects such as non-verbal communication (e.g. inter-personal space, gestures) or sociopragmatics (e.g. politeness conventions, taboo topics), where misunderstandings can often lead to more serious consequences than any kind of linguistic problem (see Gilmore 2007a). It is a useful exercise on teacher training courses to consider the different types of communicative competence that exist and which ones are actively developed in language learning materials (typically linguistic competence). If the course books being used in a particular context are seen as deficient in any way, TLs could be asked to analyse a piece of authentic discourse (such as a film extract) and discuss how it could help to develop other kinds of communicative competence.

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

2.4 Authenticity as task choices

Definition 4 is concerned with the authenticity of the *tasks* rather than *texts*, and the extent to which they mirror the (projected) real-world needs of students. Advocates of task-based language teaching (TBLT), for example, often propose a needs-based syllabus, where the course content is shaped by the kinds of tasks learners are likely to perform in the target domain. In this context, tasks such as ordering from a menu in a restaurant role-play or taking notes from a university lecture might be considered more authentic than substitution drills or controlled grammar exercises. However, this oversimplifies what is, in reality, a complex situation:

- i. The classroom context creates its own authenticity and highly controlled pedagogic tasks can be justified as important intermediary ‘skill-getting’ steps in the journey towards ‘skill-using’ and the ultimate goal of intercultural communicative competence (see Rivers & Temperley 1978: 4).
- ii. Predicting exactly what future tasks a particular group of students will need to perform is likely to be extremely difficult, unless it is a clearly defined ESP context such as ‘English for air traffic controllers’.
- iii. It takes a rather utilitarian approach to language learning and tends to favour purely functional needs over learners’ affective needs. Listening to, and understanding a song, for example, although of limited use could be a highly meaningful and enjoyable task for some students.

TLs might want to consider to what extent language learning tasks should replicate real-world tasks and how far the tasks seen in course books adequately prepare learners for their future lives.

2.5 Authenticity as assessment choices

Definition 5 relates the notion of authenticity to L2 assessment. It generally refers to ‘situational authenticity’ - the extent that test tasks mirror target language use (TLU) tasks, although it may also consider ‘interactional authenticity’ which focuses on the test participants’ engagement with the task. It is quite possible to have one type of test authenticity without the other, as the example below from an oral proficiency interview clearly demonstrates (van Lier 1989: 499). Here, a female test taker is asked about her family – a task that could be seen as having high situational authenticity. However, the interviewer’s responses lack any of the empathy that might be expected in a genuine encounter of this nature and his aggressive interrogation technique and abrupt topic changes suggest a primary concern with generating language samples for assessment purposes:

I: Where is your mother? What does your mother do?

S: She’s dead.

I: Ah - she’s dead. Very good.

I: What’s your father’s name?

S: [no response]

I: What does your father do? Where does he work? Where does your father work?

Come on girl, talk! Talk! Don’t be afraid. Where does your father work?

S: [no response]

I: What do you do at home? Do you help your mother? What does your mother do?

S: [no response]

I: (into microphone) Doesn't talk.

Of course, the test environment is artificial to some extent since test-takers are expected to maximize their display of the required L2 knowledge and skills in a limited period of time, but nevertheless authentic assessment should aim to reflect 'real world' language use and interaction patterns as far as possible. Test characteristics (particularly with 'high stakes' tests) can have a powerful impact on classroom practices, as teachers teach for the exam – an effect known as 'washback'. Positive washback has been linked to the use of authentic texts and tasks along with direct assessment of the skills we want to foster:

'If we want people to learn to write compositions, we should get them to write compositions in the test. If a course objective is that students should be able to read scientific articles, then we should get them to do *that* in the test. Immediately we begin to test indirectly, we are removing an incentive for students to practise in the way that we want them to' (Hughes 2003: 54).

Unfortunately, however, there is a tendency to design tests on the basis of what is convenient to administer or grade, rather than focusing on the skills students actually need to develop for their future lives. This is certainly the case in Japan with the National Center Test for University Admissions, which uses multiple-choice questions to principally assess students' lexical or grammatical knowledge. A listening component, still using a multiple-choice format, was only introduced in 2006 and speaking skills are not tested at all (although this is due to change in 2020). As a direct consequence of these policy decisions, high school students entering Japanese universities typically have skewed communicative competence, with very poor speaking skills. It is therefore useful on teacher training courses to consider the forces shaping assessment choices in local contexts, and whether or not test characteristics

encourage the kind of classroom practice which will be beneficial to learners in their future target discourse communities.

2.6 Authenticity as appropriate learner response

The final two definitions of authenticity focus more on the social reality *inside* the classroom. Definition 6 is closely associated with Widdowson's (1978: 80) distinction between 'genuine' and 'authentic' texts: 'Genuineness is a characteristic of the passage itself and is an absolute quality. Authenticity is a characteristic of the relationship between the passage and the reader and has to do with appropriate response'. In this sense, any (spoken or written) text, whether genuine or contrived, which learners can engage with and learn from can be seen as serving an authentic pedagogic purpose. Indeed, it may well be that materials contrived for a specific group of students, from a particular culture at a known proficiency level have a greater potential to be authenticated by them than genuine texts, originally intended for a native speaker audience, which because of their low frequency vocabulary, idiomatic language or culturally opaque references become 'pragmatically inert' (Widdowson 1998: 710) for learners, not to mention the non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) who make up the majority of trained EFL or ESL teachers around the world (Moussu & Llorca 2008). Teacher trainers can usefully consider with TLs the value of this distinction between 'genuine' and 'authentic' and the extent to which text accommodation to (i.e. convergence with) students' culture or proficiency level is desirable.

2.7 Authenticity as a search for personal meaning

Definition 7 embraces a social constructivist approach to language learning (e.g. Williams & Burden 1997), which sees knowledge and meaning as being socially situated and collaboratively constructed through interaction occurring in the classroom. Texts, tasks, learners, teacher and broader contextual (emotional, physical, social, political or cultural) factors all come together to create a unique, and constantly changing, environment where learning, we hope, can take place. In this sense, authenticity equates to the search for *personal meaning* from the experiences we encounter and is ‘a context-bounded, multi-dimensional and dynamic process of interpretation, validation and (co)construction of a text, a task or a lesson in general (Külekçi 2015: 318). Any change in the components of the complex system that shape a particular classroom context will obviously influence the learning outcomes, and teachers play a pivotal role in facilitating this ‘classroom authenticity’ through, for example:

- i. Careful selection of relevant and interesting input that meets students’ perceived needs.
- ii. Effective ‘re-contextualisation’ of authentic materials from the real world so that they are accessible to the target learners.
- iii. Task design that provides the right balance of challenge and support (e.g. Mariani 1997).
- iv. Varying interaction patterns in the classroom (individual study, pair or group work, plenary) according to the aims at particular stages of the lesson and students’ social needs.

- v. Responding to learning opportunities that arise spontaneously in the class – experienced teachers are more likely to go ‘off-script’ and deviate from the lesson plan to make activities more effective (e.g. Külekçi 2015).
- vi. Engendering a feeling of trust and belonging in the class.
- vii. Maintaining their *own* enthusiasm for the class content and activities so that teaching does not become a mechanical process (selecting, designing and trialing your own materials is an excellent way to stay motivated).

Scaffolding (instructional techniques which move students towards greater skill or understanding) can take place at both macro and micro levels in the classroom: at the ‘designed-in’ level, careful selection and sequencing of materials and tasks by the teacher helps to ensure that learners can engage with the input, while at the ‘interactional’ level, as the lesson unfolds, teacher and students interact contingently and in less predictable ways, to co-construct meaning (Hammond & Gibbons 2005). Importantly, learners’ L2 developmental trajectories are likely to be highly idiosyncratic, as they interpret the classroom input in different ways and assess its value in terms of their own goals and interests. Stimulus appraisal models of language learning (e.g. Schumann 1997) hypothesize that learners assess input across five criteria: novelty, pleasantness, goal/need significance, coping mechanisms and self or social image. Positive appraisals of input are believed to encourage greater cognitive effort and greater engagement, leading to more learning, while negative appraisals result in avoidance. Thus, this final definition of authenticity tries to embrace the full complexity of the language learning process and to recognize that, while some aspects of a lesson can be controlled, many cannot. Video recordings or transcriptions of language lessons can be used with TLs to explore how classes often unfold in unpredictable ways and how learners also authenticate materials, tasks and classroom

interaction in a personal manner so that any lesson, ultimately, means something different for each participant.

3. EXPLOITING AUTHENTIC MATERIALS IN THE CLASSROOM

The sample materials below illustrate how *some* of the principles of authenticity highlighted in Section 2 can be realized in a genuine classroom context. As is always the case, the choice of materials and task design relate closely to the specific learning environment or learner profile (in this instance, students in the Japanese university system), so, although seen as successful here, they are unlikely to be appropriate to other learning contexts without adaption (or otherwise replaced completely). These examples represent ‘unmediated’ materials where there is no intervention between writer and learners, rather than ‘mediated’ materials where a range of stakeholders (e.g. editors, end-users, governmental bodies) might influence the end product (Timmis 2014).

Teacher trainers working with teachers can use the materials here to demonstrate the process of text selection, task design, implementation and reflection possible with authentic materials. This could be followed up with activities where teachers are made aware of different potential sources of authentic L2 input and are then asked to select and try out samples of natural spoken or written language in their own classrooms. However, for this to be successful, teachers first need a solid foundation in discourse analysis, which can allow them to identify pedagogically useful features that are always present in any text but not necessarily obvious to the untrained eye (good entry points are McCarthy 1991 and McCarthy & Carter 1994).

3.1 ‘My secret life’

(<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/profiles/my-secret-life-mark-watson-comedian-31-2267228.html>)

Target group: 1st year Japanese university writing skills class

Lesson aims: (i) Reading comprehension of an authentic newspaper article; (ii) Vocabulary development (cynical, eccentric, call the shots, etc.); (iii) Improving Web search skills in English; (iv) Question formation in English; (v) Developing speaking skills (pair work interviews); (vi) Developing writing skills (newspaper article); (vii) Improving learning environment with familiarization activity for new university students.



Commentary: This activity is based on a newspaper article series from the Independent called ‘My secret life’ in which famous people reveal hidden aspects of themselves to readers. Newspaper articles have long been exploited for language learning since they provide a readily available source of topical material on an endless variety of subjects and, as ‘stand-alone’ texts, need little adaption for the classroom. It is

commonly recognized that authentic texts are naturally graded and interviews are towards the less challenging end of the cline because of their simple discourse structure (question-answer) and the limited number of ‘elements’ (interviewer-interviewee) they include. Even if students fail to understand isolated parts of the

interview, they can therefore still grasp the basic global structure, and this, hopefully, gives them a sense of control over the task.

Learners start by reading the newspaper interview with a British comedian, Mark Watson, and answering comprehension questions designed to focus their attention on useful vocabulary or cultural information in the text, for example:

- What do we mean when we say somebody ‘calls the shots’ (line 29)? Check the Oxford Advance Learner’s Dictionary online at: <http://oald8.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/> (Hint: search for ‘call the shots’)
- Find some pictures of Flinders Street Station (line 31) on the Web and discuss your opinions of this building with your partner. Mark calls the station ‘peculiar’ and ‘eccentric’: Are these positive or negative adjectives here?
- What does it mean if you ‘have a crush on someone’ (line 33)? Do a Google search to find the answer (Hint: type ‘have a crush definition’ in the search box). Find Peggy Olson from Mad Men (line 33) on YouTube: Do you find her ‘irresistible’?

Line references and Web search hints are provided for support – an illustration of how materials designers can vary the level of challenge by altering the task rather than the text itself. The questions encourage learners to notice specific linguistic or cultural features that could benefit their L2 development; for example, Mark Watson (the interviewee) mentions that his favourite building is Flinders Street Station in Melbourne, saying, ‘It’s not so much beautiful as peculiar looking. It’s covered in clocks – basically very eccentric’. Their attention is focused on the adjectives ‘peculiar’ and ‘eccentric’, which are used in a complementary sense in this context, although the Japanese translations 変 (hen) or 風変わりな (fugawarina) would tend to be seen as negative descriptions in what is a relatively homogenous society that emphasizes conformity (as the famous Japanese saying goes, ‘出る釘は打たれる’ –

‘The nail that sticks out gets hammered down’). Interestingly, Japanese often borrows words from other languages, which are marked as ‘foreign’ by being written in katakana (a different writing system), rather than kanji or hiragana. The word *eccentric* has been incorporated into the language as a loan word (エキセントリックな) and tends to have more positive connotations than its Japanese equivalents. The task also tries to elicit a personal (authentic?) response from learners with questions such as ‘Do you find Peggy Olson from Mad Men irresistible?’ to generate discussion and to make the target language more memorable. ‘Culturally loaded’ texts like this can therefore be used to heighten teachers’ awareness of the importance of cultural differences in communication and also to demonstrate how students’ intercultural communicative competence can be developed through principled materials selection and task design.

In the next stage of the activity, students are asked to produce question forms based on Mark Watson’s interview responses, for example:

If I could change one thing about myself... I'd like to be more aggressively confident, without being a real arsehole (idiot) » If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

This task allows a focus on any problematical grammatical structures (here, the conditional use of *could* and *would*) and also primes learners for the upcoming pairwork oral interview by illustrating a range of possible questions. Notice the use of taboo language here, ‘a real arsehole’, which is a common feature in authentic texts. Teachers will need to decide just how much ‘reality’ they want to expose their students to – in this case, the decision was made to use the synonym ‘idiot’ given the level of maturity of the target group.

Students then brainstorm and share possible questions for the oral interviews, which gives them the opportunity to personalize the activity and ask questions that they themselves find meaningful, such as:

- If you imagine a colour for yourself, what is it?
- Which Olympic events do you most want to watch in 2020?
- If you could get one of Doraemon's belongings, which would you choose and why?

(Doraemon is a robotic cat from a popular Japanese manga series, who has a pocket full of gadgets including the 'bamboo-copter', a head accessory for personal flight, and the 'anywhere door', a door that opens onto any destination the user wishes to visit).

Finally, pairs interview each other and write up their notes for a class newspaper; attention is given to formatting features in the article, such as font style, the use of bold typeface or italics, and the choice of an image that can encapsulate the character of the interviewee. The 'published newspaper' is normally received with great enthusiasm by the class and avidly read since, being 1st year students, they are all new arrivals at university and are keen to find out more about each other's lives.

This kind of activity might also provide useful 'loop input' (e.g. Mann & Walsh 2017: 89) in teaching workshops or initial teacher training courses, particularly where participants don't know each other well. After experiencing the task for themselves, teachers could be asked to identify the different stages included in the activity and the pedagogic rationale underpinning each step. They could also reflect on their own feelings about engaging with authentic texts or each other and the extent to which these types of activities have the potential to deepen the learning experience.

3.2 Reservoir Dogs (Quentin Tarantino 1992)

Target group: Japanese university oral proficiency class

Lesson aims: (i) Understanding the structure of oral narratives; (ii) Highlighting function of present historic tense in story-telling; (iii) Non-verbal communication (NVC) in story-telling; (iv) Vocabulary development (glove box, dashboard, etc.); (v) Developing speaking skills (pair work discussion); (vi) Developing listening skills (understanding a film scene); (vii) Recounting personal stories effectively.

Commentary: Extracts from films or television programmes can be extremely motivating and excellent sources of multisensory input for language classrooms, but need to be selected with care, considering questions such as: (i) Is the scene interesting as a 'stand alone entity' and will it be comprehensible to students without excessive recontextualization work? (ii) Are there useful discourse features (lexicogrammatical, pragmatic, prosodic, non-verbal, etc.) for students to notice in the extract? (iii) Is the level of difficulty of the text appropriate for the target group (speech rates, accents, colloquial language, assumed cultural knowledge, etc.)? (iv) Are subtitles or transcripts readily available to support learning?

Oral narratives are extremely common in casual conversation and play an important role in building or maintaining relationships, providing speakers with 'a resource for assessing and confirming affiliations with others [...] in stories, values, attitudes and ways of seeing the world are created and represented.' (Eggins & Slade 1997: 229). They are, however, largely unrepresented in language teaching materials despite their crucial role in realizing a social identity.

The Reservoir Dogs extract was selected for its interesting content, with an American traffic cop recounting a story to a colleague of a dangerous incident when he pulled over a suspicious driver for questioning. It also highlights useful features of oral narratives, which students can incorporate into their own attempts at storytelling. The task begins by contextualizing the story visually, encouraging learners to develop relevant schemas and scripts around traffic violations in the USA and to activate key vocabulary arising in the listening activity. Students are then given an outline of the story and are asked to produce their own oral narratives first *before* they listen to the original scene, which encourages them to ‘notice the gap’ (Schmidt & Frota 1986) between their own performances and that of the characters in the film and is thought to enhance language acquisition.

INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE

The transcript below shows the interaction between two Japanese students attempting to reconstruct the story in Section B of the materials, and illustrates how they cooperate together to create their own personal meaning from the task, exploiting the materials and an electronic dictionary as mediational tools:

S1, S2: Male students

(...): Transcription remarks

[...]: Concurrent speech

italics: Japanese

bold: English translation

1 **S1**: *ha he ho ho nani ni shiyoka* A piece of paper

ha he ho ho what shall we do?

2 S2: A piece of paper

3 S1: *sou nanka omoshiroi hanashi wo tsukurashite morauyo*

Yes I'll make an interesting story

4 S2: *so omoshiroku shiyo omoshiroku naruka konna shinkokuna kore*
ga omoshiroitte iunara

Yes let's do that make it interesting? I don't
understand how we can make

5 *ore wa rikai dekihin* we don't understand what why this is funny
this serious story interesting

6 S1: What do we now here it's my it's my it's my car (S2 laughs) I'm
sorry and I want to ride ride

7 *pato car once finish* (*pato car = patrol car*)

8 S2: (laughs) Oh really oh that's terrible

9 S1: *Patokaate nihongo patroruka ka?*

Is 'pat car' Japanese? Is it 'patrol car' in English?

10 S2: *Ah pata* Patrol car [S1: Patrol car]

Oh that's patrol car

11 S1: (Checking dictionary) Be available patrol car *rashii*
chuuka

patrol car-ish or

12 *Police car no hou ga iissu*

Police car would be better

13 S2: *Mm police car sq squad car*

14 S1: *nani sore squad car*

What's squad car?

15 S2: *iya soo ya issho ni kangaete*

Can't we think about this together?

16 S1: *Pair yaro*

We're working as a pair aren't we?

17 S2: *Pair detan yaro kangaetekure*

If you're my partner please think of something

In line 6, S1 suggests a quick solution to the task, imagining the driver of the car simply apologizing to the policeman and explaining that his driving misdemeanors stemmed from his desire to ride in a police patrol car – a suggestion firmly rejected by S2 in line 8. The emergence of the expression ‘パトカー’ (patoka) in the discussion then initiates a series of turns from lines 9-14 where the two students negotiate with each other to arrive at a suitable English translation. They seem to be aware that, often, English loan words are shortened in Japanese (e.g. ‘convenience store’ becomes ‘konbini’) and this knowledge causes them to doubt (correctly in this case) the acceptability of ‘patoka’ in English. S2 suggests ‘patrol car’ as a better alternative, but S1 appears to be unsure and searches his electronic dictionary for more examples. His search yields an alternative expression, ‘police car’, which generates a final suggestion of ‘squad car’ from S2. S1 appears to want to search for more information about ‘squad car’ in his dictionary, but this is curtailed by S2’s impatience to continue with the dialogue construction task.

What is clear even from this short extract of classroom interaction is that the participants are both highly motivated and deeply engaged with the task, and in this sense the authentic materials appear to be facilitating language learning. However, the teacher’s intended goal of preparing the learners for the follow-up listening task is somewhat undermined in this case as the pair ‘go off script’ and create their own original story from the outline. This illustrates the unpredictability inherent in ‘authentic classrooms’ where the act of authentication by participants inevitably takes the lesson in unexpected, and often interesting, directions (see Külekçi 2015 for more on the important role of spontaneity in teaching).

For teacher trainers, this extract illustrates the potential value of recording, transcribing, and analyzing student interaction in the classroom. Effective teachers will often move around the class during activities, monitoring learners' progress with a task, but with communicative activities noise levels are often high and it can be difficult for teachers to catch more than random snatches of pair or group-work conversation. In this sense, as teachers, we can only ever have a rough sense of what is going on inside our classrooms – recording and analyzing student interaction can deepen our understanding of these processes.

Students next act out their story scripts to other groups and usually enjoy seeing how each other's interpretations differ. They then watch the film version and compare the effectiveness of their own stories with the original, considering various discourse features such as the obligatory parts of an oral narrative, tense, vocabulary or prosodic choices, and NVC. A transcript of the scene is provided at the post-listening stage to allow for a closer analysis of the material:

- 1 **Policeman 1:** So hey, so, so anyway, I've got my gun drawn right?
- 2 And I've got it pointed right at this guy, and I tell him "Freeze, don't fucking move"
- 3 and this little idiot's looking right at me, nodding his head yeah and he's saying
- 4 "I know, I know, I know" but meanwhile, his right hand is creeping towards the glove box.
- 5 And I scream at him, I go, "Asshole, I'm gonna fucking blow you away right now!"
- 6 (story continues)

Students are introduced to the 6 stages normally included in a narrative (Labov 1972):

- i. The *abstract* (e.g. ‘Have I ever told you about the time...?’) tells the listeners what the story is about and creates a ‘storytelling space’ in the conversation by suspending normal turn-taking patterns.
- ii. The *orientation* provides background information on the time, people and places relevant to the story.
- iii. The *complicating action* provides the details of what happened and is temporally ordered.
- iv. The *evaluation* highlights the point of the story, warding off the question ‘So what?’ from listeners.
- v. The *result* or *resolution* describes what finally happened and brings the story to a satisfactory conclusion.
- vi. The *coda* acts as a bridge between the ‘story world’ and the ‘real world’ and signals the end of the narrative.

They compare these with the transcript to identify whether any parts are missing (in this case, the scene cuts straight to the complicating action) and try to imagine what might have been said in the omitted sections. They then focus on Policeman 1’s verb choices in the complicating action and discover (inductively) how he shifts from past tense to historic present tense (‘I tell him...’) and progressive forms (‘this little idiot’s looking right at me, nodding his head...’) in order to increase the story’s dramatic impact – uses of tense that are rarely, if ever, illustrated in commercially produced textbooks. Other interesting discourse features evident in the transcript include the speaker’s use of varied accents, speech rhythm and pitch to represent the different characters in the story, and his tendency to chain utterances together with the simple discourse markers *and*, *but*, or *so*, as is commonly the case in natural speech (e.g. Wardaugh 1985). As we saw in the earlier example, the language in authentic

materials can sometimes be rather risqué, but this provides a good opportunity to focus on the social role of swearing to amplify attitudinal meaning and claim group membership (particularly amongst males). A useful activity at this stage is for students to rewrite the dialogue in a more formal register, making lexical decisions in order to tone down the language to suit a different audience or context, where, in terms of power, relationships are more asymmetrical. As Wajnryb (1996) points out, examples of face-threatening acts (FTAs) are uncommon in language textbooks, and even when they do occur the opportunity for the ‘facework’ they provide is rarely exploited.

For teacher trainers, these materials provide a good example of the potential pedagogic value of even small extracts from films or other audio-visual materials. In workshops, teachers could be provided with the original scene and transcript from *Reservoir Dogs* and asked to brainstorm ideas for their use with L2 learners, before comparing their own ideas with the commentary here or finding and trialing their own film samples.

Finally, in a small group activity, students are asked to prepare and retell one of their own life stories in English, considering the typical features of oral narratives highlighted by the materials. This is a chance for them to review what they have learned and to personalize it, building relationships with classmates in a meaningful way. It is usually greeted with great enthusiasm and close attention from the audience – a grading sheet summarizing the key points for effective storytelling helps to keep the focus on the learning goals and gives students a stake in their own assessment.

4. CONCLUSION

It is probably clear from the discussion above that there are no easy answers to what authenticity actually is, or how it should best be encouraged in the classroom. The concept has been problematized and complexified considerably over the last few decades and its precise nature will always be determined by the context in which it is realized, shaped by local actors and conditions. For this reason, it is perhaps also best explored locally by practicing teachers themselves, through classroom investigations or action research cycles. Teacher trainers can begin by raising awareness of the many meanings ascribed to authenticity in the research literature and discussing with teachers which definitions they see as being most relevant and useful to their own practice and why. Only once this has been established can decisions be made in terms of what type of input or tasks are most likely to help educators achieve their teaching goals. Teachers should also be familiarized with the different types of spoken and written authentic texts readily available on the Web (newspapers, films, documentaries, soap operas, etc.) and consider, from a discourse perspective, what verbal or non-verbal features of the input could be exploited in the classroom to develop learners' communicative competence. When appropriate materials have been identified, teachers could practice adapting them to suit the needs of specific learner groups in their own contexts.

5. FURTHER READING

Mishan, F. (2005). *Designing authenticity into language learning materials*.

Bristol: Intellect. This is one of the first books to deal comprehensively with the complex issue of authenticity in language learning. Part 1 considers the theoretical underpinnings for using authentic materials, while Part 2 focuses on the practical implementation in the classroom, covering seven different ‘cultural products’: literature, broadcast media, newspapers, advertising, music, film, and ICT.

Gilmore, A. (2007b). Authentic materials and authenticity in foreign language learning. *Language Teaching* 40.2: 97-118. This is a ‘State-of-the-Art’ article from *Language Teaching* (<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/language-teaching>) - in general, this thread in the journal provides an excellent starting point for an overview of many important areas in second-language teaching. The paper reviews some of the wide-ranging issues surrounding authentic materials and authenticity in language learning and has an extensive reference list.

Tomlinson, B. (ed.) (2011). *Materials development in language teaching* (2nd Edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. This is a very accessible edited volume, with contributions from 20 expert researchers/practitioners in the field. Impressive in its scope and consideration of materials development from multiple perspectives, it provides a strong link between theory and practice.

Mishan, F. and Timmis, I. (2015). *Materials Development for TESOL*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. This book, designed for use on TESOL programmes or self-study, aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the key theoretical and practical issues behind materials development. It is written in an accessible style and

has practical tasks at the end of each chapter to encourage readers to consider the implications of the theoretical concepts or issues to their own teaching contexts.

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