

SIGNIFICANCE OF AUTHENTIC MATERIALS IN TEACHING PROCESS WRITING



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Аннотация

Мазкур мақола ёзишни ўргатиш жараёнида аутентик материаллардан муҳим омил сифатида фойдаланиш масаласига бағишланган, унга таъриф берилган ва уни ўргатиш методлари кўриб чиқилган ва кўрсатилган ёндашув доирасида ҳал қилиниши лозим бўлган вазифалар ўртага ташланган.

Аннотация

Статья посвящена использованию аутентичных материалов в процессе обучения письму как значимый фактор, даётся его определение, рассматриваются методы его изучения и ставятся задачи, которые предстоит решить в рамках указанного подхода.

Abstract

The article is devoted to using of authentic materials in teaching process writing as the Significant factor. The author gives its definition, methods of teaching, puts forward tasks which should be solved by this approach.

Калит сўзлар: саҳиҳ материаллар, ўқув, ёзув, коммуникатив фаолият, комплекс кўникмалар.

Ключевые слова: аутентичные материалы, обучение, письму, коммуникативная деятельность, интегрированные навыки.

Keywords: authentic materials, teaching, writing, communicative activities, integrated skills.

In recent days, use of authentic materials has become widespread across educational contexts. According to Jane Crawford, many a times course books

fail to address the needs of a specific group of students. For this reason, use of authentic material alongside the textbooks better caters to the needs of the students.

As far as teaching writing is concerned, a teacher can make very good use of authentic materials by highlighting real language use in various real life materials like advertisements etc. and also by assigning them tasks based on them. Allwright (as cited in Block (2)) claims that, sometimes classroom teachers need to provide different materials so that they can bring in variety into the activities. For example, in the online journal of “using comic strip to teach narrative writing” Rabideau (1993) refers to the use of comic strips which motivate the learners to work around it and build up a written piece of work where the learners find interesting ways to express their ideas. Moreover, there are different types of writing such as essay, short stories, paragraph, project work etc. By using authentic materials, writing as a skill can be effectively taught to the students. As Nunan said (13, 212), authentic materials helps the students learn and use the foreign language more indicative.

Interactive writing is a whole class or small group activity in which the teacher and the children share the responsibility for recording a negotiated text- i.e., a text they compose together. The teacher and the children take turns writing the text on the experience chart as it is being developed. In the Emerging Phase, the teacher would write more than the children, but would pass the pen to a child from time to time to write a familiar letter or word. This activity is especially useful to help learners in the emerging phase:

- make connections between oral and written language
- concentrate on sounds in words
- note spelling patterns
- view themselves as writers.

Authentic materials can also be very purposeful as Willikins believes that authentic text creates a bridge between classroom knowledge and 'a student's capacity to participate in the real world events' (p 79). Besides, a teacher has to "make sure that activities taken from different sources link together to make a cohesive whole, and that they serve to fulfill the aims and objectives of your lesson".

There are many positive sides to using authentic materials in language classroom. A few of them are discussed below:

First of all, Peacock (14) mentioned that authentic materials are intrinsically more interesting or stimulating than artificial or non-authentic materials. He also believes that if a teacher uses suitable authentic

materials in the language classroom, it motivates students because these are more interesting and inspiring than artificial materials.

Secondly, while applying authentic materials in the language classes, a teacher has to ensure that the material is exploited well. Sometimes teachers need to "shorten authentic texts, or add a glossary in order to make them more accessible" (4, 83) or suitable to the class' program of work.

Thirdly, in a language classroom, authentic materials can be used for different levels of students. For example: from a newspaper article, a teacher may ask elementary level students to find out the name of the place used in the article or s/he may ask students of the intermediate level to predict the name of the place shown on the picture and so on. So, for the teacher, suitable authentic materials might be helpful while preparing his lesson.

Besides, students can relate this type of materials to their real life situation (4, 80). Moreover, by using authentic materials in the writing classroom, a teacher can keep the students informed about what is happening in the world so they can have intrinsic educational value.

Negative Sides of Using Authentic Materials in the Writing Classes: Despite the positive sides of the authentic materials, there are some negative sides of using authentic materials in the writing classroom as mentioned by some writers. A few of them are discussed below:

Firstly, Martinez (9) claimed that authentic materials are sometimes too culturally biased that becomes challenging to understand while writing.

Secondly, when too many different structures are mixed in an article, especially students with lower proficiency level face problems to process all of them at the same time. Besides these, articles become old-fashioned very quick. For example: newspaper articles. While selecting materials teachers need to look at some points that sometimes these materials use more complex sentence and superfluous vocabulary items which are time consuming for both the students and teachers (8).

Many researchers mentioned that sometimes authentic materials need to be adapted to be suitable for a particular level of students. Materials adaptation means matching materials to the learner's needs, the teacher's demands and administration's purpose (11, 73). Adaptation of materials, therefore, plays a valuable role in language teaching. McDonough and Shaw pointed out "adoption is concerned with whole course books, adaptation concerns the parts that make up that whole" (11, 74). For the teachers, adaptation is an extensive activity because they need to change or adjust the various parts of the course book to make it appropriate for the students.

Furthermore, McDonough and Shaw also mentioned "the teacher must satisfy the demands of the textbook, but in ways that will be satisfying to those who learn from it"(11, 75). He adds that teaching materials are internally coherent but sometimes they don't suit the context. As Littlejohn (1998; as cited in Tomlinson, 2003, p. 43) affirmed that, here 'adaptation' can take place as a rather formal process and if necessary, the teacher can adapt the exercises by changing and then writing out a modified version for the class. Madsen and Bowen mentioned "The good teacher is constantly adapting. He adapts when he adds an example not found in the book or [...] when he introduces a supplementary picture"(as cited in 11, 75). So, it can be said that teachers need to adapt materials for the writing classes.

While teaching through the product approach to writing skills, authentic materials plays an important role among the learners. Harmer (6, 90) mentions the use of postcard as authentic material: students are given a model postcard to study and after that they are asked to imagine a situation in which they have to write a post-card to be sent to an English-speaking friend describing a holiday. This activity is like parallel activity where students stick to a model what has been given by the teacher. After finishing the task students can show their cards to the others or teacher could correct them later.

Moreover, Badger and White (2000) investigated that there are four stages of product based writing. These are familiarization, controlled writing, guided writing and free writing. 'Familiarization writing' "makes learners aware of certain features of a text" (1). On the other hand, 'control' and 'guide writing' section concerns about the content area and allows the learners to practice the writing skill. And in 'free writing' learners are allowed to use the writing skill as a part of a genuine activity; for example: letter, story or essay. So, by following the procedures of product approach teacher can teach the writing skill through using authentic materials.

According to Murray (12) as cited in the online journal 'using comic strip to teach narrative writing' process approach of writing can be divided into three stages: prewriting, writing and rewriting. Firstly, prewriting considers researching, note-taking, title writing, outlining. Secondly, in writing the writer prepare the first draft. Lastly, rewriting is about rethinking, redesigning, line by line editing.

This is also a useful approach while writing. Basically it is useful for the students of English for specific purposes. According to (10), there are many genres in writing such as; report writing, recount, narrative, descriptive, news item and much else. Here, students need to know about the content, topic, style of

genre. Moreover, they need to have general knowledge about the genre to write about it.

However, teachers and students can use weblogs here to conduct research by asking the students to collect useful authentic data for specific class projects. Harmer (6, 82) mentioned some examples of authentic materials to teach genre.

❖ In the first activity, the material is newspaper headlines. Firstly, the teacher discusses about the newspaper headlines with the students. Then the teacher introduces how the newspaper headlines are constructed and how students can write their own articles. After that, students are asked to match with the newspaper headlines with the stories what they came up with.

Then, the teacher uses elicitation techniques to know about students' responses on how to write an article. Here, he/she talks about how the headlines can be written, which tense are usually used, what special vocabulary are used in the headlines. After elicitation, students choose a topic and in pair they are asked to write a short story and the headlines. Students write their headlines on the board so that the rest of the students can predict about the story. Here, the teacher makes corrections instantly. After this, students write the article according to the headlines. While writing the article teacher can offer help to the students. Moreover, teachers can stick to the article on the notice board or students can read out the article in the class.

❖ Another example of authentic materials in genre writing is mentioned by Harmer (6, 263). Here, the task is applicable for the upper intermediate level and above learners. The activity is writing a review and the focus is on identifying genre features.

Firstly, students are asked to look at movie reviews from the newspaper. Then the teacher discusses on what students should consider while writing a review. After that students are asked to watch a movie or play and take notes about the plot, characters and other important things. The teacher follows the pair work or group work to get engaged through the activity. Also it motivates the students for writing from their own. Then, they write the first draft and teacher can help them by providing constructive feedback. After finishing the final draft, students vote for the best one.

Moreover, integrating skills is important in improving students' abilities. Harmer (7) argues that the position skills are separated and should be treated as such] is clearly ridiculous for two reasons. Firstly, it is very often true that one skill cannot be performed without another. Secondly, though, people use different skills when dealing with the same subject for all sorts of reasons. Sometimes, we

need to focus on just a certain skill, but in later activities, we may require another skill or other skills. Brown (3) also emphasizes that the added richness of the latter [integrated-skills courses] gives students greater motivation that converts to better retention of principles of effective speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Reading and writing are considered closely related, and so are speaking and listening. The differences between writing and speaking, however, are more distinct because they are often compared as written and spoken language. In particular, the necessity of accuracy varies as well as the swiftness of response or feedback from the reader and the listener. Both skills, nevertheless, are productive skills, and are easily integrated. At any step of the writing process, students can talk about their products, and exchange their ideas, give feedback and comments, and then in the end, they can present their products orally, which is regarded as an important part of communicative activities.

As we pointed out earlier, authentic materials do not have to be revolutionary in nature. Their value and strength is in helping students to engage in new literacy practices within their day-to-day lives. What may seem like a small change to an outsider may mean a lot to the student. For example, one student described how his life changed because of new literacy practices he mastered: "I looked at the paper, and I didn't know what I was to do. But now I know how to read the paper. I know how to look in the newspaper and pick out different coupons, different things to do for the best buy, where you get the best bargain at, and the best place to get it. I know how to do that now."

It can be said that in a writing classroom, authentic materials are definitely valuable parts which have to be selected and controlled carefully by the teacher. In this study, the researcher tried to explore that textbook materials are undoubtedly a valuable resource but at the same time authentic materials can increase the student's potential for writing English language. Through the suitable authentic materials teacher can motivate the students to gather more knowledge about the outside world. Also, the students have the chance to share their predictions and thoughts to the other students and thereby gain confidence in being able to communicate in English. Also, the way the teachers use the authentic material is also very important. Student's participation is mandatory to make an effective class. Especially while using the authentic materials, both teacher and students have to enthusiastically participate equally in the classroom.

Consequently, it can be said that, from teachers and students perspective authentic materials can bring an effective writing classes. Also, to construct an effective writing class there should be a combination of both effective materials

and teaching system to engage the students with the tasks. So, the students can enhance the opportunities for language learning.

Recommendations:

□ During collecting the data and findings the researcher has pointed out following implications and recommendations:

□ First of all, the teachers need to be careful while selecting and accessing authentic materials for the writing classes. The selection of useful authentic materials is a big challenge for the teacher and also they need to implement the materials in an effectual way with the students.

□ Secondly, most of the teachers and students believe that authentic materials can be best used in the university level courses. Although from the researchers' perceptions it varies from the difficulty level of the students, so the same materials might not be appropriate for both the pre-intermediate and advanced level students. For the lower level students' teacher can play role as an interpreter who can use techniques like paraphrasing, miming, using pictures in order to get the message across and comprehend the article. Also, the teacher has to focus on the subject area of the learners and the topic has to be relevant, challenging and also realistic.

□ Thirdly, according to the survey, learners and teachers are not motivated with the use of authentic materials which does not match with the checklist result. Here, the teachers need to compare the students' performance such as the writing scores between an authentic materials based writing class and a textbook based writing class. Then, they can evaluate the motivation of using authentic materials in the writing classes.

□ Fourthly, the survey results and checklist represents positive attitude towards the exposure of authentic materials in to the real life, so teachers have to be aware while choosing an effective materials concerning students age, level and interests. For example, in the discussion based class, teacher can provide some useful materials besides discussion to grab the student's attention. The teacher can supply article about that social issues which she mentioned in the class. Also, if every student has an article and teacher asked everyone to read that and share their thoughts relating the topic with the others then it can be effective.

□ Fifthly, while using authentic materials cultural appropriateness can be a big issue, so teachers are free to do adaptation before using the materials to motivate the students. As in the classroom student's response and participation are very important to make the materials effective and the classes interesting. If there are pictures in the text book teacher can use elicitation. Teacher can also include their own experience to motivate the students in the classroom. Also, at the

university level teacher can give examples from the current affairs to encourage the students and modified the task according to the understanding level of the learner.

□ Sixthly, at the university level the students need to learn advanced English so they have to meet with the challenges included complex sentences and new vocabularies. But in the selected observed classes the researcher found that teachers are using random articles which might be quite easy for them. So, teachers need to choose the higher level materials to increase their motivation.

Next, learning environment is also an important factor while using authentic materials frequently. Teachers'- student's relationship and social values and attitudes has to be considered before using authentic materials. It also depends on the learners whether they prefer only realistic materials or textbook materials for their writing classes. So, teacher need to develop a better understanding between students and teachers, so they can easily measure the frequency of using authentic materials.

Then, there should be an appropriate balance of sub skills between the writing activities. All the classes can't be only on paraphrasing and summarizing writing. The teacher can develop some effective questions during providing the handouts. Such as in previously mentioned example of 'South Asian Slave Brides' teacher could have brainstormed the students by providing some questions to the students as a 'pre-writing' task. Like; can you guess the issue only giving them the title? Then, teacher could provide some 'while-writing' questions such as;

- i) what is the reporter surpassing in publishing this news?
- ii) Who are the targeted audience?
- iii) Comment on the style of writing. How far the author is successful to create emotion among readers? Likewise, teacher could provide some 'post-writing' task also.

At the end, it can be said that teachers can get the best use of the multimedia, computer and projector in the writing class to encourage the students. However, there should be relevance between the content and the learners needs. If the teachers can properly implement all the content, authentic materials and also the resources, the writing class can be more effective and successful for the learners.

REMEMBER

◆ Authentic texts can be found in the world of the students outside of the classroom, and teachers can use a variety of strategies for obtaining them.

◆ Authentic purposes for reading and writing texts need to reflect the students' real-life purposes as well as the teacher's pedagogical purposes.

◆ Teachers need to explain the reason for the use of authentic texts and activities in the classroom, especially when some students' are accustomed to a traditional view of what constitutes reading and writing in school.

◆ Authentic texts do not vary only by type but also according to region and context, justifying selecting texts from the actual worlds of the students rather than from generic collections of 'real-life' texts.

◆ Authentic texts can be difficult texts, and teachers need to discuss that reality with students.

◆ Keeping the purposes, or functions, for reading and writing authentic texts in the forefront ensures their authenticity.

◆ Assessment of success with authentic texts needs to be related to the authentic purposes for reading and writing them.

◆ Factors to consider when using authentic texts and activities include class structure, variability in student experience and ability, and variety of texts.

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