

Using Authentic Texts for Classroom Learning: A Potential Way for Students to Meet the Real World

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Abstract: Through this study I am going to analyze the benefit of using authentic text in the process of language learning. Authentic text can be used in the classroom for effective learning. Teachers can use the sources of authentic materials to get authentic texts for the students. Through the interpretation of the statistic reports we can understand the advantages and progress of the students' language learning. Besides texts book knowledge real world texts help learners to face real world strongly.

Keywords: Authentic materials, Authentic texts, learning process, real world learning, advantages of using authentic text, effective classroom learning.

Introduction

Authentic materials are those kinds of materials which are used in the real world. Authentic means real which is related to truth. This adjective describes something that is real or genuine not counterfeit. Authentic materials can be the best source of learning in the classroom about the outside world. Students can know about the real world through authentic materials. Textbook knowledge is not enough for students to face the real world. So, the students must be prepared for a real-life situation.

Sources of authentic materials

There are many sources of authentic materials that help students to learn. Teachers have to find out the sources which are suitable for the students. The sources are given below

Agony columns Images Advertisement Notices
Audio cassettes Cards journals Postcards
Brochures Stamps Magazine T.V programs
Cartoons Songs and song lyrics Tickets
Comics Cooking recipe Maps Wall Papers
Currency Product details Menu cards
Directories Pictures Movies Weather reports
Internet cards Greetings Newspaper etc.

Advantages of using authentic materials in learning

Through authentic materials, students are exposed to the real world. These materials can bring out the creativity of the students. Students can be motivated by learning these materials. It helps to develop among the students the power of interpreting social and economic conditions. It gives courage to the students to face real-world problems.

What is authentic text?

Among authentic materials, the authentic text is the most important element for learning. We can call any text authentic if that text is used in the real world and it has value in the outside world. It must have to serve the purpose of real-world experiences.

Teachers have to consider two factors. The factors are

i. The type of text

ii. The purpose of the text

For example, if a teacher gives any driver manual to the students to read, it must help the students to know the procedure of getting a driving license whenever the students want it.

Sources of authentic text

Teachers can find out many sources where they can find out the authentic texts. The sources are

- i. Newspaper
- ii. Application
- iii. Flyers
- iv. Brochures
- v. Creative writing and fiction
- vi. Assessments reports
- vii. Election materials etc.

What should students do with an authentic text?

Authentic texts are needed to design an authentic task. Teachers give students examples of authentic texts so that students can use them just like real-world activities. For example, we can say that if a teacher uses a restaurant menu card, what will be the use of this menu card. The main reason behind using behind is to make his / her students familiar with what to eat and whatnot. The reason must not answer comprehension questions. So, through that menu card teacher can create a context where students do what they have to do in the time of ordering food in a restaurant. It can give them real-world feelings and constraints.

Through this authentic text, students can also learn different types of language use and vocabulary when they are drilling in the context. Teachers can also help them by giving some vocabulary before starting the drill. It will help students to guide through the situation. Not only the guidance but also it will help them to make strategies to face the situation.

Advantages of using authentic texts in language learning

1. Authentic texts can be quick and easy to find.
2. Authentic texts can be up to date and topical.
3. It's what students will have to cope with eventually.
4. They have to learn how to cope.
5. There is a sense of achievement.
6. There is more of it around that students can help themselves to/ It is easier for students to find.
7. There is more stuff for teachers to choose from.
8. You can sometimes find a translation.
9. You can compare several versions of the same story.
10. Students can follow a story and recycle the vocab.
11. They might know the story already, making comprehension and guessing vocabulary much easier.

Disadvantages of using authentic texts in the classroom

Authentic texts chosen by a teacher are not designed as part of the program. It takes time and thought to match new materials to course outcomes.

It also takes work to get the materials physically together and design effective and engaging tasks.

It means using authentic texts may only make up a small part of your classroom teaching. But there are clever and time-effective ways of incorporating them: for example, replacing a non-authentic reading or listening text in the coursebook with an equivalent authentic text, along with tasks practicing similar skills.

Related Literature review

Steffanie Zazulak(April26, 2017) in her blog says about the advantage of using authentic materials in the classroom for language learning. In her blog she says,

“Using this content to teach the English language can make the learning process even more engaging, imaginative and motivating for students. It can also be useful to elicit genuine responses from learner.”

(Using authentic material from the real world to teach English by Steffanie Zazulak)

Zazulak also points out the ways of selecting text as authentic text for the classroom. She says that it will be a wise fruitful decision that if teachers find out the students interests about things and selecting the authentic texts according to the interests. She also suggests not taking difficult texts and long texts because it may be the cause of students losing their attention from the text.

Alex Case in his written article named “Advantages and disadvantages of using authentic texts in class”(11 November, 2012) talks about positive aspects of authentic texts. He also remarks the way of getting rid of the negative aspects and finds out the process of getting graded texts. He says in article

“My own position is that it is rarely better to use a text just as it comes, however good the tasks you put with it. Having said that, I can totally understand the problems people have with textbook readings as they usually exist and are usually used, and the appeal that authentic materials can have. By examining the advantages and disadvantages of using authentic texts in the classroom, in both practical and pedagogical terms, I hope I will be able to give some hints on how to bring the advantages into classes and avoid the disadvantages with both authentic and graded texts, and to give a balanced view for those who are still undecided on when, how and how much to use authentic texts in their own classroom.”

(Alex case, Advantages and disadvantages of using authentic texts in class)

Lewis Lansford also says in his article (Authentic materials in the classroom: the advantages, 16th May,2014) about the advantages of using authentic materials in the classroom. In that article he also defines the concept “authentic” and the reasons why he likes authentic texts. He says that the advantage of authentic materials is that they give higher-level students exposure to unregulated native-speaker language – the language as it is actually used by native speakers communicating with other native speakers.

From oxford University press a journal was published in 3rd july 2014 and in that journal there is an article titled “Using authentic texts in the EAP classroom” and the author of the article is Edward de Chazal. In that article the author also talks about the difficulty of choosing authentic texts for classroom. The author in that article states

“When you’re choosing an authentic text to use in class, there is also the question of level to consider. By ‘level’ we usually mean language level – whether a text is at B1 or B2, for example – but there’s another crucial aspect: cognitive level. Some texts are much more challenging than others in terms of how difficult their ideas and concepts are. When selecting a text, it’s important to think about what you want your students to get out of it. Do you want them to gain a comprehensive

understanding of the whole text, or will they use it more superficially – for example, in order to identify key words? In this way, you can use authentic texts which are at a high linguistic level in your lower level classes, so long as you set appropriate, achievable tasks.

Let's try and bring all these questions together in a possible scenario. Suppose our EAP students are recent high-school graduates planning to go to university. Their English language level is solid B1. They will have recent experience of high school exams such as IB (International Baccalaureate) or A-level. Using an IB text is ideal in this scenario: it is at an appropriate level, both linguistically and cognitively. These students usually approach such textbooks in order to learn something new, as well as to develop their English."

There is a web blog named Edumaxi also stating the advantages of authentic texts in the class room. In that blog author states that authentic texts can remove the gap between real life society and classroom oriented society. In that blog it is stated

"The main advantage is they can be exceptionally motivating. Students sometimes describe the gap between the classroom and the street as a gulf. Using authentic materials in class helps students feel they understand the real world, and are active members of the English-speaking community. And in fact, they are! After class your learners will need to deal with real texts, so you're giving them essential tools for living and learning autonomously.

Authentic materials are also engaging. Real things tend to be more interesting than textbook simulations. And you can choose a wide range of texts, which are current (no more articles about Michael Jackson!), and which are tailored to your students' interests."

This blog article also talks about the difficulty of authentic texts to crack by the students. It is stated

"This is the first question teachers ask. How can beginners deal with ungraded language?

First, we need to choose the right texts. We're probably not going to give beginners extracts from university textbooks.

However, the most important principle is to 'grade the task, not the text'. We can choose any text we think will engage our students, then control the difficulty of the tasks they do with it.

For example, even for a beginner-level class it's possible to design useful and achievable reading activities with a newspaper. We can first have students identify and navigate the sections. Students then focus on one section, such as the weather, from which they can extract all the key information.

The one note of caution with the 'grading the task' principle is we can't patronize students by giving them a complex text, then getting them to do something babyish with it. That's demotivating."

Research objective

Through this study, I will try to find out the benefits of using authentic texts in classroom learning.

Research questions

- Do authentic texts like; newspaper helps students to learn language presentation?
- Are authentic texts helpful for students to face real-life situation?
- Do authentic texts help to enrich students' vocabulary what they can use in the outside world?

Hypothesis of the study

Authentic texts can be used effectively in classroom learning. These texts can also be used to develop students' vocabulary stock. They can also get enough knowledge about the ways of language presentation. Through reading authentic texts students can get the courage to face real-life situations outside classroom activities.

Limitation of the study

The study is limited only to the students of Parul Institute of Arts (randomly selected).

Research methodology

The present chapter deals with Research Methodology which covers Research Design, population and sampling of the study, tools of data collection, and Data Analysis and Interpretation. They are in following way:

Population and sample of the study:

Participants of the study were the students of Parul Institute of Arts (randomly selected).

Tools of data collection:

Data will be collected using Questionnaire.

Analyzing the data collection

In this section I am going to analyze the data collected from the students of Parul Institute of Arts. The data have been collected through multiple choice questions and two open ended questions.

1. Samples were collected randomly from the campus of Parul Institute of Arts
2. Gender:

Male	Female
13	13

3. Age: All of the students' ages are around 18-23
4. Medium of education in school: Most of their medium of education in school is mainly Hindi
5. Belonging: All of them live in Parul campus.
6. Languages known: Most of them know Hindi, Gujarati and English

Analyzing Multiple choice questions:

7. Do you read any authentic texts in classroom?

yes	No
100%	0%

From this above table we find out that in the classroom teachers use authentic texts in the classroom. Actually it is a good sign because sometimes courses are also being made in such a way that teachers have to use authentic texts as classroom text material.

8. For what purposes do you read authentic texts?

Chatting	Fun\entertainment	Learning language	Facing real life situation
19.23%	11.53%	30.76%	38.46%

From this above table we can find out the purposes of the students of reading authentic texts. We see that most of them read authentic texts for the preparation for facing real life situation.

9. How often do you read authentic texts?

Always	often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
0%	38.46%	61.53%	0%	0%

From this table 9 we can find out how frequently they read authentic texts. We see from the table report that maximum students read authentic texts off and on. Some of them also read usually.

10. With the help of authentic texts, I easily get to know the real world situation.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
76.92%	23.07%	0%	0%	0%

From this table 10 we can find out the answer of question that are authentic texts help to know the real world situation. We see from the numerical expression from the table that all most all of them strongly agree that authentic texts help them to know the real world situation.

11. Do you think authentic texts can be used for language learning and teaching?

yes	No
100%	0%

From this table 11 we see that all of the students agree in the aspect that authentic texts can be used in classroom for language learning and teaching.

12. Authentic texts enhance my vocabulary.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
50%	38.46%	11.53%	0%	0%

This is the most important table in this project. From this table we can know that are authentic texts help to enlarge their vocabulary or not. We see from the table that half of them consents that their vocabulary is being enhanced because of reading authentic texts. Others are also in the positive line.

13. With the group discussion with authentic texts, I motivate myself to learn

Reading and writing.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
38.46%	46.15%	15.38%	0%	0%

From this table 13 we can find out that whether authentic text motivates them in reading and writing. We see that most of them simply agree in this aspect. So, we can come up with the conclusion that not always authentic text is useful for group discussion.

14. Using authentic texts like; newspaper, I can enhance my knowledge about outside world.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Agree
76.92%	23.07%	0%	0%	0%

From this table 14 we can find out that whether authentic texts; like, newspaper enhance the knowledge box of the students about different aspects of the outside world. We see from the table that almost all of them strongly consent that this kind of text enhances their knowledge about different aspects.

15. Do you think authentic texts like, newspaper help you to learn language presentation?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
65.38%	23.07%	7.6%	0%	0%

From this table 15 we again see that authentic texts strongly help student to know how language is presented in different ways according to the subjects. Through this we can clearly realize that this language presentation helps student in their academic as well as their future professional life.

16. Sometimes authentic texts are difficult to understand.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
57.69%	19.23%	19.23%	0%	0%

From this table 16 we observe that authentic text is not always easy to understand. In this case teachers can actually convert the text into the most comfortable stage so that student can understand the text easily.

Analyzing Open Ended Question:

17. What kind of authentic do you like most?

Usually they like outside world. So, they like to read authentic texts. Most of them like magazine, beauty tips, health tips, latest tech news etc.

18. What is the best advantage you have got from authentic texts?

Actually from authentic texts students can learn to handle the real life situation. Unanimously they all like this advantage most.

Result of this research:

After analyzing the data we can conclude that using authentic texts is a very good way of learning. It helps students become aware to face real-life situations and be courageous to face them. Not only that but also authentic texts help to learn language presentations to the students. Students can learn unknown vocabulary by reading these kinds of texts. But we also find out a problem. The problem is that

authentic materials are sometimes very difficult to read and understand. The solution to this problem is that teachers have to be more cooperative and helpful to the students to make the texts easy to understand. They have to make the texts easy.

Conclusion

Finally, we can conclude by saying that using authentic texts is the best way of learning in the classroom for the students. Teachers have to be more conscious of selecting the texts and must make them easier for the students. But for getting effective impact by using these texts teachers have to create real like situations as much as they can. So, if we want our generation smarter and knowledgeable, using authentic texts for classroom learning is the best solution for this.

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