Acumen to Adapt Authentic Materials for E-English Class

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Abstract: *The current trend in ELT in these days of e-learning is 'Integrative Computer Aided Language Learning' which is based on blending multimedia computers and Internet with English language learning. This 'hypermedia' enables learners to navigate interactive, self learning real-life material with the helping hand of the Internet at their own pace and path. Learners are provided with choice, control and interaction using computer as a tool to understand and to use the language. As the class has no boundaries of place and time, learner can interact with the information to sharpen his/her language/communicative abilities according to his/her convenient place and time. Against this background, producing and providing the appropriate material is very important. The paper focuses on pedagogical perspectives in preparing authentic materials to teach / learn English language in e-class.*

Keywords: *E - class, Authentic Material, Principles of Language Acquisition, Access-self Materials*

1. INTRODUCTION

An ideal English Language Teaching class aims improving Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing skills and the four aspects – Grammar, Vocabulary, Spelling and Pronunciation. Every teacher in this digital era wants to improve the quality of the class by using the real life materials to improve the learners' language proficiency. E-class plays major role in facilitating the suitable authentic materials in digital format that can be used according to the needs of the teacher and the learner. At the outset, the material a teacher can provide in an E-class can be classified into the following three types.

➢ *Learning materials*. They are usually created with a curricular didactic aim and may include different kinds of documents and activities.
➢ *Real life materials*. Day-to-day life communicative material is authentic. Such material can be used as a resource for language learning.
➢ *Reference materials*. Materials like Dictionaries, encyclopedias and manuals help the learners to refer for further details during learning.

Besides these materials, the teachers and learners are provided Navigation tools, Office tools, Content and learning management systems, Social networking tools and Didactic materials authoring tools that help to interact with the materials in the e-class.

With these materials and tools, E-class is not only a network of contents with digitalized, interactive and real-life materials, but also a communication technology that promotes interaction with the teacher, other learners and the media. These opportunities facilitate conditions for a more socio-constructive, cooperative and student-centered kind of learning, which takes into account the learner needs and fosters the learners' autonomy.

2. TYPES OF AUTHENTIC MATERIALS

Marrow opines that "a stretch of real language produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to carry a real message of some sort." Harmer says that authentic texts (either written or spoken) are those which are designed for native speakers: They are real text designed not for language students, but for the speakers of the language in question. Nunan thinks that a rule of

thumb for authenticity here is any material which has not been specifically produced for the purposes of language teaching. Based on these definitions, we can find the real meaning of authentic materials: they are real language; produced for the native speakers; designed without the teaching purposes. In this sense, there are a large amount of authentic materials in our life such as newspaper and magazine articles, TV and radio broadcast, daily conversations, meetings, documents, speech, and films. One of the most useful is the Internet. Whereas newspapers and other materials date very quickly, the Internet is continuously updated, more visually stimulating as well as interactive.

Authentic materials in language teaching are to classified to use them as per the needs of a particular class. According to Gebhard, authentic materials can be classified into three categories.

➢ *Authentic Listening-Viewing Materials:* TV commercials, quiz shows, cartoons, news clips, comedy shows, movies, soap operas, professionally audio-taped short stories and novels, radio ads, songs, documentaries, and sales pitches.
➢ *Authentic Visual Materials:* Slides, photographs, paintings, children' artwork, stick-figure drawings, wordless street signs, silhouettes, pictures from magazine, ink blots, postcard pictures, wordless picture books, stamps, and X-rays.
➢ *Authentic Text Materials:* Newspaper articles, movie advertisements, lyrics to songs, restaurant menus, street signs, cereal boxes, information brochures, maps, TV guides, comic books, greeting cards, and bus schedules.

David Gardner and Lindsay Miller point to different sources, including not only the obvious ones like newspapers, magazines, and brochures, but also user manuals, foreign mission information, airline promotional material, etc. in their book 'Establishing Self-Access'. Teachers can also use old course books, and supplementary books, and there is now a huge range of graded readers, which will cater for the reading and vocabulary development of a wide range of learners. These language resources in electronic format can be kept as materials / references in the E-class. The material is to be kept with clear instructions to use them at appropriate time of learning.

3. APPROPRIATE USE OF AUTHENTIC AND UNAUTHENTIC MATERIALS

Orientation classes are to be provided to the learners to use the materials in the e-class. Individual records of their self-access work, showing what they studied when and with what result is to be arranged to estimate their learning. Even teachers can negotiate a personal study programme with individual students, pointing them to personalized 'learning paths' to lead them through particular authentic materials. Authenticity should not be thought of as a simple two-way issue – either authentic or unauthentic. It is, rather, a matter of degrees or types. Authenticity in materials design and learning activities has been an integral part of English class, chiefly because it increases student motivation due to face validity, provides appropriate cultural knowledge, exposes to 'real' language, takes attention to future student needs and provides more creative teaching environment (Richards). The five types are:

➢ *Genuine input authenticity:* The input is created only for the realm of real life, but is used in language teaching.
➢ *Altered input authenticity:* There is no meaning change in the original input, but it is no longer exactly as it was because of changes like lexical glossing, visual resetting, or changes in pictures or colors.
➢ *Adapted input authenticity:* The input is created for 'real life' but adapted by the classroom teacher. Words and grammatical structures are changed for better comprehension.
➢ *Simulated input authenticity:* The input is created for the classroom and attempts to copy the style and format of the genuine. It may have many authentic text characteristics and is often indistinguishable from the genuine.
➢ *In authenticity:* The input is created for the classroom with no attempt to make the materials resemble genuine authentic materials though there may be a few, possibly incidental authentic features.

Tomlinson states that there are typically two sides in this debate: "One side argues that simplification and contrivance can facilitate learning; the other side argues that they can lead to faulty learning and that they deny the learners opportunities for informal learning and the development of self-esteem". Yet authenticity is not an easy concept to pin down. McDonough & Shaw note, "The issue of 'authenticity' has been somewhat controversial….". Dunkel points out that terms like "authentic language," "authentic discourse," and "authentic materials" are all defined in "holistic, vague, and imprecise ways." Beginners and lower proficiency students need contrived or artificial material to help them gain an initial understanding of basic elements of the language. Non-authentic materials are as valuable as authentic materials.

4. REAL LIFE MATERIALS OF E-CLASS NEED TO BE ACCESS-SELF NOT JUST SELF-ACCESS MATERIALS

It is recommended a more humanistic approach to self-access activities which aims to develop both the declarative and the procedural knowledge of the learners, whilst at the same time making a positive and broadening contribution to their personal and linguistic development. The materials need to be self-access in the conventional sense of providing opportunities for learners to choose what to work on and to do so in their own time and at their own pace. The materials aim to engage the learners' individuality in the activities in such a way as to exploit their prior experience and to provide opportunities for personal development. It needs to involve the learners as human beings rather than just as language learners.

The authentic material needs to stimulate various left and right brain activities at the same time and thus maximizes the brain's potential for learning and development. It should provide rich, varied, and comprehensible input in order to facilitate informal acquisition and to provide opportunities for selective attention to linguistic or pragmatic features of the discourse.

5. VARIOUS PRINCIPLES OF LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Tomlinson & Masuhara suggests that the criteria for material development should be clear, accountable, specific and valid to be really useful for language learning. Considering their ideals of authentic materials for effective English language teaching / learning the following principles are suggested to prepare authentic materials for E-class:

1. **The learners are exposed to a rich, meaningful, and comprehensible input of language in use:** In order to acquire the ability to use the language effectively the learners need a lot of experience of the language being used in a variety of different ways for a variety of purposes. They need to be able to understand enough of this input to gain positive access to it and it needs to be meaningful to them. (Krashen, 1999; Long, 1985; Tomlinson, 2010)

2. **Engaged Learners both affectively and cognitively in the language experience:** If the learners do not think and feel whilst experiencing the language, they are unlikely to achieve language acquisition and development. Thinking whilst experiencing language in use helps to achieve the deep processing required for effective and durable learning and it also helps learners to transfer high level skills such as predicting, connecting, interpreting and evaluating. This is true of learners' responses to the content of what they are reading, writing, listening to or saying but the emotions stimulated by the self-access learning experience need to be positive and pleasurable to maximize the learning. (Arnold, 1999; Tomlinson 2011)

3. **Language learners can benefit from noticing salient features of the input:** If learners notice for themselves how a particular language item or feature is used they are more likely to develop their language awareness. They are also more likely to achieve readiness for acquisition. Such noticing is most salient when a learner has been engaged in a text and then returns to it to make discoveries about its language use. This is likely to lead to the learner paying attention to similar uses in subsequent inputs and to increase the potential for eventual acquisition. (Schmidt & Frota, 1986; Tomlinson, 2007)

4. **Provide opportunities to use language for communicative purposes:** Communicating in the target language allows learners to gain feedback on the hypotheses they have developed and on their ability to make use of their hypotheses effectively. If they are interacting, they are also being pushed to clarify and elaborate and they are also likely to elicit meaningful and comprehensible input from their interlocutors. (Swain, 2005)

6. DELIVERY SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES

Developers of self-access authentic materials must be driven by universal language acquisition principles but must obviously also consider those principles which are specific to the delivery of materials to particular learners.

1. **The materials should aim to offer learners better learning than a normal course:** The materials should offer more learning time, more experience of the language, more variety of experience of the language, more individual support, and more feedback. Many learners doing language courses spend much of their time focusing on examples of the language and insufficient time experiencing language in use. Materials should not offer them even more examples of the language but should offer more experience of the language in use instead. Materials can and should provide more variety, support, and feedback, especially if they help learners to contribute to the development of materials likely to cater for their needs and wants.

2. **The materials should aim to help the students to become truly independent:** Ideally materials should be training learners to become less and less dependent on materials and more capable of gaining from any exposure to the language in use that they experience. One way of doing this is to add a final activity to materials which encourages the learners to seek extra authentic texts and to try to make discoveries from them. Another way is to actually facilitating self-learning authentic materials.

3. **Feedback should acknowledge achievement and encourage improvement:** Often materials provide answer keys. Learners need to be provided the reasons for the choice. They need to acknowledge the achievements of the learners while at the same time providing information, references, suggestions, and further activities which will help them to improve even more. This is not easy with self-access authentic materials but it can be done by the following means.
   • be available to learners of E-class through communicative tools like chat and e-mail
   • provide samples of other learner work to compare with
   • keep samples of proficient users' performance on the similar tasks
   • facilitate continuation tasks linked to self-evaluation of performance on a task.
   Effective feedback is to be designed to monitor learners' own progress and gains a sense of achievement besides encouraging them to take responsibility for their own learning.

4. **The tasks provided in E-class need to be realistic:** Many classroom activities are dissimilar to the authentic communication situations of real life. Ideally self-access authentic materials should include tasks which are life-like and should even include tasks which are real. For example, writing letters to newspapers, writing to celebrities, writing to companies for information about products, phoning agencies for information, writing magazine reviews of films and/or restaurants.

5. **Easy and reliable access to the needed materials:** The best self-access materials are to be provided in the E-class in a convenient manner so that the learners can access to the desired materials. The material gets its value through its accessibility. The learners feel encouraged to spend more time once they realize that the material available in E-class is easily reachable to them as per their needs and choices of learning.

7. CONCLUSION

There are many very successful e-classes with self-access centres and courses already developed with authentic materials in various formats. These, however, could still gain from developing principles as suggested above and then using them to evaluate their current practice and materials. New centres and

courses could gain a lot from developing their principles and then using them to drive the development (and subsequent evaluation) of their practice and materials. What is really important is to remember that self-access materials should be informed by Delivery Specific Principles but should be driven by Universal Principles. The criteria for evaluating self-access authentic materials should be based on such core principles as "the ability to interest and engage learners, to be meaningful and challenging and to have a sustained positive impact" (Cooker, 2008).

E-class plays major role in providing the suitable materials and in applying appropriate methods by mediating the teacher and students in language learning. The class has no boundaries of place and time. Learner can interact with the information to sharpen his/her language/ communicative abilities according to his/her convenient place and time. The incentives of the updated version of the class are autonomy, spirit of learning and using the language, acquiring the ability at one's own pace and method and the spontaneous feedback during the activities makes the learning faster. E-class with authentic materials has brought a phenomenal change in the relationship between the teacher and students. The role of the teacher, the nature and context of learning, as well as the function and relative importance of course content have all been challenged and redefined with the integration of ICT tools and English language learning.

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