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USING ADEQUATE MATERIALS IN TEACHING ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES FOR THE PRACTICE OF LANGUAGE SKILLS

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***Abstract**: The use of authentic materials in the ESP class is a necessity dictated by students' needs and supported by current trends regarding the purpose of ESP in higher education. Authentic materials are a valuable source of factual information and also constitute the pretext which can be used by the ESP teacher in order to practice all language skills in a meaningful professional context. The paper explains the role and benefits of using authentic materials in the ESP class, tackles with the concept of authenticity and its various interpretations and identifies features of authentic materials.*

Keywords: *English for Specific Purposes, authentic materials, language skills, professional communication*

Authentic materials are among the most important tools a teacher can and should use in ESP classes to make the teaching effective and meet didactic objectives. This paper tackles with the effects of using authentic materials in teaching ESP, in accordance with the numerous studies which emphasize that the use of authentic materials is regarded as a useful means to stimulate and motivate students, arouse their interest and expose them to the real language they will face in the real world as professionals.

The use of authentic materials is a condition in ESP, as students need to learn specific terminology of their field of study while also practising professional communication in real-life contexts. The use of authentic materials is not restricted to ESP though. In general EFL classes, teachers started using them in the 1970s as a result of the spread of the Communicative Language Teaching Approach.

Martinez (2002) defines authentic materials as the materials which are prepared for native speakers and not designed to be used for teaching purposes. Kilickaya (2004) has another definition for authentic materials, which is "exposure to real language and use in its own community." When the context is English for Specific Purposes, the definition of authentic materials can be extended to incorporate any kind of resource, under a variety of forms, which is likely to exist and serve a role in concrete professional situations.

The availability of such materials for ESP teachers is limitless, in the era of digital communication. The access to online materials under the form of articles, texts, visual elements, videos is largely available to anyone interested in using the above as a language learning opportunity. However, the main challenge faced by ESP instructors is to use these resources effectively, so that the informative

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and skill-formative purpose is met. Bacon and Finnemann (1990) state that teachers need to discover methods of exploiting authentic materials in classroom instructions. Indeed, it is the teachers's task to design activities which should serve specific class objectives. The objectives may range from developing basic language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) with their adjacent subskill to practicing concrete language structures (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, language functions etc), developing students' soft skills, creating positive attitudes regarding various professional situations.

A great number of researchers assert that if students are willing to use English language sufficiently, they must be exposed to the language, exactly as it is used in real life situations by native speakers. Nuttall (1996) argues that authentic texts represent a motivating source for learners as they are clear evidence that the language is used for real-life purpose by real people.

There are sufficient theoretical arguments in favour of using authentic materials in the English language class. Nunan (1997), considers that exposing learners to authentic materials is indispensable, because of the rich language input they provide. Exposing students to such language forms will enable them to cope with genuine interaction, whether it is inside or outside the classroom. Researchers claim that when authentic materials are used in class, students will get the sense that the real language for communication is being learnt, as opposed to classroom language itself, where lists of words and sets of grammar rules traditionally represent the learnt language. In contrast to the design of the text books, authentic materials are intrinsically more active, interesting and stimulating.

In ESP educational settings, authentic materials offer a variety of benefits related to the listening skill, speaking, reading, writing, and the sub-skills, such as: grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and intonation. Authentic materials increase learners' motivation, supply them with authentic professional background and genuine, real language that they will use in real life situations related to their field of study. Intrinsic motivation plays a major role when learning a foreign language. ESP students have to learn English in a contextualized manner if we want them want to efficiently master the language in a concrete professional situation.

The capacity to handle real-life professional language is also emphasized by Rogers and Medley (1988) who argue that teachers should help students to see and hear the target language being used as the primary medium of communication among native speakers - as language with a purpose. Students exposed to authentic materials in the foreign language classroom are better able to process foreign language input in real-life situations. Teaching English for Specific Purposes through authentic materials can help students bridge the gap between the theoretical approach implied by formal education and the reality of professional communicative contexts, thus turning the teaching-learning process into an enjoyable and efficient motivating experience. Using authentic materials in teaching English as a foreign language can therefore be one of the keys to achieving student motivation for learning, as an essential condition to successful language acquisition.

What are authentic materials?

One of the scholarly attempts to label and define authentic materials belongs to Ellis & Johnson (1996) who broadly define authentic materials as any texts written by native English speakers for native English speakers. Wallace (1992) defines authentic materials as real-life texts, not written for pedagogic or educational purposes. A somewhat contrary view by Tomlinson (2012) states that an authentic text is the one which is produced in order to communicate rather than to teach, the text does not have to be produced by a native speaker and it might be a version of an original which has been simplified to facilitate communication. Herrington and Oliver (2000) created a new pedagogical concept, the so called "authentic learning". This concept is directly related to the students' real life and prepares them to face and cope with real world situations. Jacobson et al (2003) regard authentic materials as printed materials, which are used in EFL classes in the same way they would be used in real life situations. According to Nunan (2001), authentic materials are ordinary texts not produced specifically for language teaching purposes.

Considering the above-mentioned definitions, authentic materials are represented by materials not necessarily designed by a real speaker, which can be primarily modified, for the sake of specific classroom objectives.

According to Gebhard (1996), authentic materials are classified into three categories: authentic printed, visual and listening materials. A perfectible list of examples taken from the ESP domain would include the following:

- Authentic text (printed) materials: technical reports, instruction manuals, scientific papers and articles, newspapers.
- Authentic visual materials: technical symbols and specifications, charts, tables, graphs, schematics, diagrams.
- Authentic listening or (listening/viewing) materials: scientific lectures, product descriptions, TV shows, radio news, videos etc.

Kilickaya (2004) claims that authenticity has been debated by many researchers. Consequently, they suggested different definitions for this problematic term. Defining authenticity proves to be a challenging but nevertheless important aspect for both materials designers and language teachers, who are willing to use authenticity in language teaching in EFL classrooms. A series of studies were conducted committed to studying authenticity and the use of authentic materials in EFL classes. In this context, Widdowson (1996) explains that authenticity represents a term which creates confusion because of a basis ambiguity. That is the reason why there are so many definitions related to authenticity.

Features of authentic materials as ESP input materials

In order to identify the characteristic features of authentic materials to be used in the ESP class, we should start from the definition of authenticity. According to Tatsuki (2006), authenticity is taken as being synonymous with genuineness, truthfulness, validity and reliability of materials. Shomoosi and Ketabi (2007) argue that authenticity represents the materialization within an original context and the interaction of its participants. Taylor (1994) goes beyond and says that authenticity is not only connected with language content, but also with the participants, the form and manner of interaction and the analysis of the setting and activity. Subsequently, as illustrated by Breen (1985), one can identify the following interrelated forms of authenticity:

1. **Text authenticity**: refers to the authentic qualities of a given text that is used to help learners in developing an authentic understanding. White (1981) states that an authentic text is the one which "is neither cut nor reworked or modified in any way either in its written or oral form"; it will include all the material features of the text itself. A text is authentic if it is not written for teaching aims, but for real life communicative purposes where the writer has a certain message to pass on to the reader.
2. **Learner Authenticity**: indicates the ability of students to understand the meaning of the text, the same way professionals do in real life, which means the ability to extract the right meaning or to comprehend correctly the listening material proposed by the teacher, and also to respond adequately to these materials.
3. **Task Authenticity**: refers to the chosen activities given for the students to be engaged in an authentic communication and authentic goals for learning. It represents the students' involvement in the given task. In other words, task authenticity is the relationship between the student, the input text and their response to it.

When applying the above features to the ESP we obtain a general framework which can be used as guidelines when selecting material to use for linguistic purposes and when designing suitable activities for its successful implementation. The text (conceived in the more general meaning as "material", including audio materials) should be one which was or is actually used in professional contexts. Be it a product specification or a TED talk on technological advances, its authenticity makes this type of materials motivating and meaningful.

Moreover, students must be encouraged to take on genuine roles and practise real-life communicative acts. The authenticity of the learner in this case leads to intrinsic motivation which is a condition of language success.

Last, but not least, the tasks designed by the language instructor should resemble as much as possible real communicative tasks which are likely to take place in a professional context. Simulating a discussion with the supervisor, a team meeting to discuss quality issues, a telephone conversation with a client to negotiate delivery terms, the presentation of a new R&D product, these are all plausible professional contexts implying role assumption and the meaningful use of language.

The use of authentic materials in the ESP class is strongly recommended as one of the most efficient methods of increasing intrinsic motivation. Besides the informative content, authentic materials of all types are a valuable resource for the practice of language skills in ways which emulate the real use of professional communication.

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