

# Using Authentic Texts in the Language Classroom

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## 1.0 Introduction

According to McDonough and Shaw (1993:43), authenticity can be described as,

“a term which loosely implies as close an approximation as possible to the world outside the classroom, in the selection both of language material and of the activities and methods used for practice in the classroom.”

This paper will discuss the arguments for using these authentic texts in the classroom and the problems created for learners as a result of using such texts.

First, an overall presentation of the arguments for authentic text followed by the reasons underlying each argument will be discussed. Arguments considered will be the increase in learner participation in learning, enhanced learner grammar and lexicon knowledge through self-discovery, and the expansion of learner awareness about language and differences between written and spoken mediums. Also discussed will be the need for reduced reliance on pedagogical rules, and the opportunity to overcome problems in outdated textbooks and traditional reading comprehension classes.

Secondly, the problems created for learners will be presented. These problems will be discussed against the arguments for authentic text. Authentic text will be discussed as lacking guidance or focus for learners, providing too much terminology and information through awareness techniques, introducing spoken text without opportunities for practise, and requiring learners to struggle through text in the absence of pedagogic grammars.

Finally, arguments for authentic text and the associated learner problems will be summarized followed by implications for the classroom.

## 2.0 Arguments for Authentic Texts

Breen and Candlin cited in Rutherford (1987, 149-150) contend that,

“In the past, it has seemed easier to somehow separate the learner from the knowledge to be learned – to ‘objectify’ the target language as something completely unfamiliar to the learner. This objectification of the language in relation to the learner has perhaps been encouraged by a narrow definition of what the object of learning actually is, and by an incomplete view of what the learner has to offer. We have tended to see the target only in terms of ‘linguistic competence’ or textual knowledge, and we have limited such knowledge to the level of syntax without reference to structure above the sentence. Thus, ideational and interpersonal knowledge, which textual knowledge and from which textual knowledge evolves, have tended to be overlooked or neutralised.”

However, the use of authentic text in the classroom may bring the learner and the knowledge together because the learner is lifted from the confinements of traditional and more recent methodologies to become an intricate part of the language learning process.

Furthermore,

“Generalization is a crucially important and pervading strategy in human learning. To generalize means to infer or derive a law, rule, or conclusion, usually from the observation of particular instances.” (Brown, 1994: 91)

Hence, authentic text may present learners opportunities to make generalisations about grammar and vocabulary language usage for themselves and observe how prior language usage knowledge may be employed or adapted in new circumstances.

Authentic text also appears to supply the essential input needed to increase learner awareness of language usage in written and spoken mediums and decrease reliance on pedagogic language rules, which may be viewed as inadequate since they are simplifications of language usage. Likewise, authentic text may provide an alternative to outdated textbooks, which may not meet the needs of learners, and provide learners with the various genuine texts they need to aid and improve reading comprehension.

## **2.1 Learner Participation**

Traditional teaching mainly consisted of teaching patterns and excluded the learner from being involved in the learning process. The Classical Method had a “focus on grammatical rules, memorization of vocabulary and of various declension and conjugations, [as well as] translation of texts, [and] doing written exercises,” (Brown, 1994: 16) which was adapted from the teaching of Latin grammar. Eventually, the Classical Method became known as the Grammar Translation Method. The only difference was a “focus on grammatical rules as the basis for translating from the second to the native language.” (Brown, 1994: 16) Eventually, the Audiolingualism Method came into practice. It stressed “the mechanistic aspects of language learning and language use” (Richards and Rodgers, 1986: 61) by utilizing pattern practice and structural drilling. While all these methods may be beneficial to lower-level learners, the teaching of patterns excludes the learner from taking an active role in the learning process. It also excludes learners from learning about all the other grammatical uses of words or language not considered in the lesson and seeing familiar grammatical forms with new usage.

More recent methods such as the Notional-Functional method,

“rather than describe the core of language through traditional concepts of grammar and vocabulary...[attempt] to demonstrate the systems of meanings that lay behind the communicative uses of language.” (Richards and Rodgers, 1986: 65)

However, like traditional methods before, this method also does not consider the learner an active participant in the learning process. It focuses on the presentation of language forms and usage in materials chosen according to notion or function criteria.

Willis (1994: 56) points out that,

“It is the learner who has to make sense of the insights derived from input, and learners can only do this by considering new evidence about the language in the light of their current model of the language... [Consequently,] They should be encouraged to process text for themselves so as to reach conclusions which make sense in the terms of their own systems.”

As both traditional and more current methods fail to involve the learner in the learning process it would seem that authentic materials are needed in the classroom to create opportunities for learner participation. Learners differ in knowledge, skill, and styles, so authentic text may activate and engage an individual learner’s prior knowledge and skills about language patterns and forms because viewing and/or manipulating the text will activate their meanings.

In classes where learners vary in abilities, authentic text may also challenge learners regardless of proficiency through text that stimulates educated assumptions. Willis (1990: 68) proposes that,

“just as lexicographers and grammarians clarify and systematise their knowledge about the language by analysis of text, so learners can make use of similar techniques to formulate and test hypotheses about the way language items are used.”

As learners at different levels of proficiency individually gain awareness of unfamiliar grammatical uses of words or language they may be brought closer to target language knowledge, because “ultimately, what is learned is controlled by the learner and not the teacher, not the textbooks, not the syllabus.” (Ellis and Hedge, 1993: 4) Learners largely responsible for development may also make and test hypotheses on language features not mentioned or covered too quickly or insufficiently in presentational lessons.

## **2.2 Learner Self-discovery and Knowledge: Grammar**

According to Little (1994: 102),

“As we attempt to move from atomistic to more complex meaning we are inevitably involved in grammatical relationships [so]... for this reason grammar is as important to the communicative as to any other approach to language teaching.”

Unfortunately,

“many teachers believe that there must be only one ‘right’ way of describing something... Secondly, many teachers unquestioningly accept the rules as holy writ, even in the face of conflicting evidence... [and thirdly] for teachers who take a rather structuralist approach... they do not particularly expect grammatical rules to make sense.”

(Chalker, 1994: 31)

Therefore, learners that are restricted to a study of language presented by teachers or text materials may miss important aspects of the language not mentioned by material writers because “concocted texts exemplify the grammar not as it is but as the course writer believes it to be.” (Willis, 1993: 92) Moreover, it appears that learners do not merely assimilate rules but instead make hypotheses about the language to which they are given exposure. In fact, there is

“no evidence to support the notion, for example that grammatical constructs are ‘learned’ as one would learn (i.e. commit to memory) a collection of facts in some academic discipline.”

(Rutherford, 1987: 61)

Consequently, if learners are to learn grammar through self-discovery they will need plenty of authentic data from which to make hypotheses to prevent learning that omits important areas of language or incidentally covers the topic. Two authentic text approaches that may promote self-discovery and knowledge are consciousness-raising and schema-based.

### **2.2.1 Consciousness-Raising**

The problem of missed or concocted aspects of language from either teachers or text syllabuses may be overcome by “an approach to grammar that is compatible with how one views SLA [Second Language Acquisition].” (Ellis and Hedge, 1993: 5) The approach would focus on learning grammar through consciousness-raising (awareness of a grammar feature) rather than presentational teaching or practise. That is to say, consciousness-raising embodies a

“means to attainment of grammatical competence in another language (i.e. necessary but not sufficient, and the learner contributes), whereas ‘grammar teaching’ typically represents an attempt to *instil* that competence directly (i.e. necessary and sufficient, and the learner is a *tabula rasa*).”

(Rutherford, 1987: 24)

Consciousness-raising grammar activities may provide learners the needed exposure to language to make generalisations about the language because “No one could ever learn English, for example, given a vocabulary list and sets of rules for syntax, morphology, phonology, etc., no matter how accurate or how comprehensive.” (Rutherford, 1987: 151) Also, as every learner will have different priorities as to the language learning opportunities in a given text exposing learners to authentic text enables them to focus on language details and internalize generalizations for themselves.

Consciousness-raising may also enable learners to compensate for discrepancies they encounter in new data by cultivating and extending their prior knowledge of grammatical rules or language usage. The teacher in this method of teaching, according to Willis (1990: 69),

“no longer simply presents language to the learner for the purposes of illustrating language form. Instead they encourage learners to examine their own experience of the language and make generalizations from it.”

Generalizations based on prior knowledge then becomes an important aspect of learning because learners do not simply assimilate the rules or patterns presented in course-books or by course-teachers they become aware of them through exposure.

In addition, rather than learning through patterns, structures, and repetition, consciousness-raising activities “seek to get a learner to understand a particular grammatical feature, how it works, [and] what it consists of.” (Ellis and Hedge, 1993: 5) Learners may then proceed at their own pace in language development reducing the number of learners that become unnoticed or left behind, which may happen in repetition, drilling, and structured classes.

### **2.2.2 Schema-based**

Barlow (1996) offers another method to overcome traditional methodology problems of omitted language usage or restricted language pattern or form studies. It is a schema-based approach. The approach is

“based on grammatical units, which are form-meaning pairings embedded in a discourse context. The formal part of these grammatical units may look similar in the most productive cases to rules, but they are mostly the result of inductive processes: the accretion of categorized instances.” (Barlow, 1996: 15)

Barlow points out that some of the schemas may have different degrees of abstraction, but they are “ultimately based on and anchored by actual instances of usage” (Barlow, 1996: 17) enabling generalisations to be based on language usage rather than on grammatical patterns. Hence, by using authentic text data,

“the learner is not seen as just a passive pattern extractor, but is, in addition, a cognizer with the ability to make numerous cognitive distinctions, some of which will be able to be linked with formal distinctions made in the grammar.” (Barlow, 1996: 17-18)

### **2.3 Learner self-discovery and knowledge: Vocabulary**

An approach to vocabulary that enhances understanding “lies in an examination of ... relations between lexical items

- (a) above sentence level
- (b) across conversational turn boundaries

(c) within the broad framework of discourse organization.” (McCarthy cited in Carter, 1987: 174)

Authentic text may fulfill these requirements as it enables learners to become part of the learning process by formulating their own assertions about vocabulary and lexical relationships. Learners would be given greater opportunities to examine and discover relationships held with lexical items and recognise features of lexicon not normally taught or overlooked by grammatical presentations.

Also, in his discussion of learning words and meanings, Richards in Carter (1987: 188) points out that “much of the way a particular meaning is formed cannot be recorded in a dictionary.” A dictionary may expedite the knowing of a word, but there is more to learn than simply a word’s absolute meaning. For that reason,

“the use of authentic text makes it likely that not only structure and necessary choice but also the typical behaviour of words and phrases will be captured and... highlighted for the learner.”

(Willis, 1993: 92)

In addition, learners presented with authentic text may be given more meaningful context rather than learning lexical items in isolation or in inauthentic contexts, which might hinder learner motivation and knowledge.

Willis (1993) and Barlow (1996) offer two ways of introducing vocabulary through meaningful context that facilitate self-discovery and knowledge: they are lexical syllabus and lexical subschemas, respectively.

### **2.3.1 A Lexical Syllabus**

According to Willis (1993: 90), taking lexis as a syllabus design would “ensure that attention is drawn to the most frequent words in the language, their important meanings and the patterns in which they typically occur.” Willis’ argument for a lexical syllabus enforces the necessity of authentic text in the classroom as a method of learner self-discovery and knowledge, because it is difficult for a teacher to present everything learners are required to know about a word. Highlighting the most frequent words provides learners with a greater opportunity to work with words to develop generalizations for themselves. Moreover, by having this opportunity to work with words in authentic text learners,

“are discovering the language... They discover words and they assign these words to classes... At the same time learners are discovering the classes to which words might belong and assigning the words in their lexicon to these classes.”

(Willis, 1993: 84)

The opportunity to make generalizations about words and language through personal discovery may also reduce the need for mundane presentation and, according to Willis (1993: 92) is “more likely to arouse and harness the learner’s curiosity than a presentational methodology which makes learners more dependent on the teacher.”

### **2.3.2 Lexical Subschemas**

Barlow (1996) in his presentation of a schema-based approach argues that although lexical subschemas such as ‘indulge oneself’ are infrequent they are valuable for

advancing a learner's level of proficiency. In fact, Honeyfield, cited in Carter (1987: 166), emphasizes that,

“even a very diligent student who graduated from a course after learning all the 3000 selected words would find, on encountering an unsimplified text, that somewhere between 10 and 20 per cent of the words are unknown to him. And these words are by definition the more infrequent words in the language. They may be crucial to the meaning of a passage but may occur only once in a chapter or book.”

Therefore, to advance a learners proficiency “it is essential that [learners] be given opportunities to read and analyse a wide range of authentic texts” (Barlow, 1996: 12) rather than be limited to restrictive grammar points. By viewing various authentic texts learner are empowered with the ability to advance their inductive processes and discover relationships for themselves.

#### **2.4 Authentic Language Usage Awareness**

Learners that are learning through self-discovery need plenty of authentic data to shape awareness about language. A corpus-based design, data-driven learning, or authentic spoken texts may provide the amount and type of text needed to prevent learning that fails to cover other important areas of the language, only incidentally covers a topic or provides only concocted inauthentic language.

##### **2.4.1 Corpus-based Design**

The Collins Birmingham University International Language Database (COBUILD) is a large collection of modern English texts stored on computer for reference and teaching. It may increase learner awareness and knowledge about authentic language usage and provide a valuable resource for teachers as a method of personal enlightenment or when they need to respond to student queries on language.

Once a request for information has been made, the computer compiles elaborate word meanings and usage profiles. The learner may then examine the profiles directly with a path of exploration either pre-determined by the teacher or in a more open-ended way thusly, expanding their knowledge of grammatical or lexical language usage. The database materials, from which profiles are extracted, represent authentic usage compiled from various sources

“and go a long way towards dispelling the myths and distortions that have arisen from reliance on intuition-based ‘armchair’ linguistics – myths and distortion that are too easily perpetuated from one generation to another of dictionaries, grammar and coursebooks.”  
(Johns, 1994: 296)

Also, COBUILD may help teachers:

“(i) determine the most frequent patterns in a particular domain; (ii) enrich their own knowledge of the language, perhaps in response to questions raised in the classroom; (iii) provide ‘authentic data’ examples; and (iv) generate teaching materials.”

(Barlow, 1996: 30)

##### **2.4.2 Data-driven Learning**

Data-driven Learning (DDL) is another microcomputer data-based approach to designed to increase authentic language usage awareness as well as learner self-discovery and knowledge. As a method for teaching grammar and vocabulary it is based on

“the notion that the task of the learner is to ‘discover’ the foreign language, and that the task of the language teacher is to provide a context in which the learner can develop strategies for discovery – strategies through which he or she can ‘learn how to learn’.”

(Johns, 1991: 1)

The approach is similar to COBUILD, but differs by giving the learner “direct access to the data so that the learner can take part in building up his or her own profiles of meanings and uses.” (Johns, 1994: 297)

Through a concordance printout of authentic text the DDL approach may increase learners language usage awareness, because it “offers a unique resource for the stimulation of inductive learning strategies – in particular the strategies of perceiving similarities and differences and of hypothesis formation and testing.” (Johns, 1994: 297) Learners are able to develop their own hypothesis about the language they are exposed to on the printout and thusly may become more aware of all the other grammatical uses of words or structures in a path of exploration determined by the learner, himself.

The printout may also allow learners to discover things that are unobservable and unsuspected by teachers when materials and/or their paths of exploration are prepared and presented.

### **2.4.3 Spoken Text**

According to Richards and Rodgers (1986: 71), characteristics of the communicative view of language are

- “1. Language is a system for the expression of meaning.
2. The primary function of language is for interaction and communication.
3. The structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses.
4. The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning, as exemplified in discourse.”

However, the spoken language is often neglected in favour of ‘correct’ grammar study. Learners need to become aware of the fact that “what is codified in English grammars does not tell the whole story” (McCarthy and Carter, 1995: 207) to develop conversational features of language and strategies for their usage. This development is important because the majority of communication is through the spoken language and codified grammars may not always provide the full explanation required about language usage to communicate in the spoken medium effectively. Also, grammar differences between written and spoken language exist because they fulfill different functions. Spoken language produced spontaneously is unlikely to draw on previous knowledge of textbook grammars and involves non-syntactical forms of speech, such as gap-fillers. Conversely, written language is more likely to involve prior knowledge of certain grammars with a focus on form and meaning. Consequently, “learners need to be given more grammatical choices if they are to operate flexibly in a range of spoken and written contexts.” (McCarthy and Carter, 1995: 207)

Spoken language through task-based activities that emphasize transactional exchanges, especially in information gap activities, may also not capture and reproduce typical characteristics of authentic social intercourse.

Materials and activities containing authentic text may give learners more grammatical choices and display differences in language patterns between concocted written and authentic spoken language, which may provide learners with more reasons for wanting to communicate in the target language. This exposure to written-spoken language differences may also empower learners with the ability to “properly describe one text as being more ‘speakerly’ or ‘writerly’ than another.” (McCarthy and Carter, 1995: 216) In addition, material containing authentic language may also avoid the possibility of “producing speakers of English who can only speak like a book, because their English is modelled on an almost exclusively written version of the language.” (Rings cited in McCarthy and Carter, 1995: 207) Thus, authentic spoken texts in the classroom may more equip learners to cope successfully in future situations and/or conversations outside the classroom. Furthermore, learners are not merely following the teacher’s dictation of language, they are formulating their own hypotheses about language and generating language based on their own hypotheses, which may increase motivation and eagerness to communicate in the target language.

## **2.5 Pedagogical Language Rule Reliance**

Pedagogic rules are simplifications of language characteristics, usage, or rules designed to help language learners understand the language they are studying. As simplifications they may introduce the risk of overgeneralisation or undergeneralisation and consequently be seen as inadequate. According to Little (1994: 105),

“Traditional pedagogical grammars present paradigmatic rules of morphosyntax and sentence structure which have been derived from an analysis of the language produced by educated native speakers. Such grammars invite us to move from the abstract to the concrete, from the general rule to its specific realisation – which in many cases will turn out to be a partial exception to the general rule. Even when example sentences are provided to show rules in action, the overall effect of such grammars is to emphasize form to the virtual exclusion of meaning.”

Westney also emphasises Little’s opinion. He states that,

“since there is no way of establishing a ‘best’ rule for any particular set of language phenomena, and our understanding of linguistic structure and of psycholinguistic processes is not such as to influence the formulation of pedagogical rules other than indirectly, there are sound reasons, both practical and theoretical, for learners and teachers to assume a cautious, if not skeptical, attitude towards any pedagogical treatment of language regularities.” (Westney, 1994: 72-73)

Since, “Even the best grammars are incomplete, partial, and misleading,” (Johns in Willis, 1993: 90) there is a need for authentic texts to increase the variety of input and provide exposure to naturally produced language. Use of authentic material may encourage student involvement in the learning process because they will be discovering grammar rules or language usage rather than learning through pedagogic rules, which are apt to under- or overgeneralise a general rule.

Unfortunately, many teachers and learners want simplicity and are against too much terminology. This creates the need for pedagogic language rules. However, pedagogic rules may introduce the danger of hard, fast rules given by teachers, which dismiss exceptions that do not fit the rule. So, according to Leech (1994: 23),

“while the short cut of explicit presentation of grammar by ‘rules of thumb’ can lead to an immediate sense of control over speaking and writing, this sense is to some extent built

on false and simplified assumptions.”

Generalisations made by learners is likely to prevent disappointment at later stages of development when learners may discover how learnt rules may fail in newly presented situations. Moreover, learners do not learn language by exposure to rules but by looking at the language critically, “going from the data (or instances) to generalisations (or ‘rules’), rather than following the traditional method of grammar instruction, going from the generalisations to the instances.” (Leech, 1994: 20)

## 2.6 Material Modification

“In many teaching situations... textbooks are considered to lag behind an understanding of the nature of language and of students’ linguistic and learning needs.” (McDonough and Shaw, 1993: 92) In these situations, the introduction of authentic text or materials modified by teachers to represent real language or language usage may meet the needs of learners and stimulating their interests and knowledge.

According to Widdowson in Johns (1994: 294), “the use of ‘simplified’ texts is often recommended as a way of ensuring that the language is authentic in purpose yet within the learner’s grasp.” However, in his example of a text simplification exercise involving the choice between the active or passive voice, Johns demonstrated that “simplification is liable to destroy those very features of the original text (for example, the relative ‘weight’ of the elements of the message) that account for the choice.” (Johns, 1994: 294) Johns’ example enforces the need for authentic text and the need for that text to be introduced into the classroom in its original state to avoid the loss of language features, which may be important in the original text. Thus, as Rutherford (1987: 172) proposes, perhaps what is needed is “‘Simplification’... – but of the task, not the text.”

## 2.7 Reading classes

“With reading... the learner may exercise a measure of control on his own. He himself can decide to slow down, speed up, skip ahead, skim, re-read as many times as necessary, look up words in the dictionary, consult parallel sources, ask questions of someone else who happens to be present, etc. – in short, he is to a considerably greater extent his own architect of the comprehension format.” (Rutherford, 1987: 171-172)

Although reading comprehension furnishes numerous opportunities for learners, according to McDonough and Shaw (1993: 103),

“The traditional way of organizing materials in a unit is generally to begin with a piece of specially written material... which is ‘read’ by the student... essentially focuses on items of grammar and vocabulary.”

This traditional method of teaching reading does not expose learners to a variety of text styles and genuine written materials, which does not give learners the opportunity to become involved in the comprehension process and make generalisation about language for themselves. Further, learners are not given a chance to see how past knowledge can work or be altered in authentic text. Therefore, traditional presentation of reading materials

“seems artificial because the intention is to draw learners’ attention to items of structural usage rather than the authentic features which are characteristic of ‘real’ text, or what makes texts ‘hang together’.” (McDonough and Shaw, 1993: 104)

Presenting learners with a variety of authentic written materials, therefore, may give learners part control of the learning process and enable them to see how new and prior knowledge can be manipulated in different situations. Authentic text also may increase learner motivation, because learners are not merely reading for the teacher or studying specific features of language.

### **3.0 Problems Faced by Learners**

Richards and Lockhart (1994: 59-60) suggest that “Differences in people’s cognitive styles reflect the different ways people respond to learning situations,” and Chalker (1994: 36) states that learners want “understandable rules that appear to work... prescriptive guidance... simply arranged [information]... and many are against ‘too much terminology’.” These opinions suggest that authentic text in the classroom may therefore create problems for learners because some learners may not welcome the introduction of learning through self-discovery and/or awareness.

Authentic text may be a distraction to learners that like to spend a lot of time planning, focus on only one task at a time, or that have low proficiency in the target language. These learners may feel the authentic text is irrelevant at their present stage of learning, unimportant to their reasons for learning the language, or that the lesson could be better learnt by simple presentation, explanation, or rote-learning. Also, learners are expected to make generalisations for themselves. Learners that are unwilling to take risks or feel uncomfortable with ambiguity may become uneasy when presented with authentic text without teacher direction and hence, become resentful of the teacher’s methodology. These learners as well as learners that use visual clues and take notes may require explicit teaching and thus, expect the teacher to be an authority figure.

Grammar through consciousness-raising or schema-based methodology may frustrate learners that prefer traditional methods or expect prescriptive guidance and data-based methods may provide too much information and confuse learners in their attempt at understanding. In addition, it is difficult to provide opportunities in the classroom for authentic exchanges so learners are usually subjected to audio/video media. Furthermore, learners that are not given simple understandable pedagogic rules may feel they are simply labouring through mounds of unfamiliar or confusing text.

### **3.1 Self-discovery**

Learners that prefer traditional methodologies or learning aimed at examination success may resent self-discovery and the formulation of generalisations about language features. There is also a chance that these language features may be so transparent or confusing that consciousness-raising or schemas are probably unnecessary or burdensome. The use of self-discovery then becomes a tedious task for learners since there may really be nothing to discover about a grammar or lexical structure or the text may be too hard to interpret.

#### **3.1.1 The Need for Guidance: Grammar**

“By the time a student completes secondary school he or she has been exposed to thousands of hours of teaching from a variety of different teachers. As a result the learner may have formed very different views about what constitutes effective or ineffective teaching.” (Richards and Lockhart, 1994: 54)

In light of this view, learners with strong learner beliefs about grammar in the learning process may consider the teaching of explicit grammar important and essential, especially in societies where the education system expects teachers to be supervisors and resume responsibility for what transpires in the classroom. These learners may become resentful of learning grammar through self-discovery because they expect explicit descriptions to be given by the teacher.

Similarly, “learners who feel that English grammar is a major obstacle to their learning may [also] favor a grammar-based teaching methodology.” (Richards and Lockhart, 1994: 53) For that reason, grammar through consciousness-raising activities or schemas may cause learners to resent teachers and their teaching methodology because they are unable to see the point of such activities. Likewise, although the value of explicit presentation of grammatical rules in the learning process may be doubtful, learners may develop feelings of uneasiness when teachers do not provide grammar explanations as summaries of topics covered in the lesson. This uneasiness may then cause learners to lose confidence in their teacher as well as motivation for language development because they do not feel they have learnt or accomplished anything in the lesson.

Another problem for learners may occur when students learn languages for the purpose of attaining success on an examination. In these situations, teachers have the responsibility to ensure that learners maximize their chances of success. If students are presented with authentic text they may not be given the necessary exposure to rules, patterns, or structures which they will need to achieve success on the examination. Moreover, authentic text may be a distraction to learners because it may be so apparent or introduce or focus on more language learning possibilities than a learner is able to comprehend or consolidate into examination related features.

### **3.1.2 The Need for Guidance: Vocabulary**

“It has not been convincingly demonstrated that the information learners obtain from meeting words in a variety of contexts is more beneficial, either in terms of knowledge of forms or meanings of lexical items, than either translation or simply looking up the word in a dictionary.” (Carter, 1987: 169)

So, learners may successfully process dictionary meanings without having to struggle through vast text to gain knowledge of words.

Also, “students from a culture where rote learning and memorization are widely used may think that these are useful strategies in learning English.” (Richards and Lockhart, 1994: 53) These beliefs may cause learners to become resentful at procedures that require them to examine text and become aware of words and lexical items rather than having them clearly presented through traditional methods of learning and memorization. Vocabulary may be learned by heart by rote learning and contribute language learning because

“Rote learning involves the mental storage of items having little or not association with existing cognitive structure. Most of us, for example, can learn a few necessary phone numbers and zip codes by rote without references to cognitive hierarchical organization.” (Brown, 1994: 79)

Learning words in context may likely discourage less advanced learners, due to

overwhelming input and confusion and therefore be of no benefit in the learning process. Especially in the beginning stages of language learning learners may benefit more from memorization and rote-learning. In fact,

“quantities of initial vocabulary can be learned both efficiently and quickly and by methods such as rote learning which are not always considered to be respectful.

[As a result,] It may be dangerous to underestimate such a capacity.” (Carter, 1987: 153)

Lastly, in early stages learners have great difficulty with English sounds and phonetics. Traditional presentations of pattern or structure drilling may help learners overcome these initial problems and accordingly build confidence and motivation.

### **3.2 The Need for Simplicity and Practise**

COBUILD and Data-driven learning may also cause problems for learners, because they both produce vast amount of data from which learners should induct generalisations. As a result, learners may become overwhelmed at the amount of data and dissatisfied because the data may not facilitate organized and simplified learning and not provide a clear focus on items of interest.

Access to real spoken language is largely restricted to use of audio/video recordings so the provision of authentic spoken text may continue to frustrate learners wanting to engage in the spoken medium. According to Hopkins and Nettle (1993: 158), “many learners will experience frustration in a situation where they are exposed to language and expected to understand it without being given an opportunity to use it.” The audio/video recordings provide learners with observations of real-life conversation exchanges, but as it is a difficult to find ways for involving classroom language learners in authentic and effective conversational exchanges learners, usually, only play the role of audience to a tape or video of monologues or scripted conversations.

### **3.3 The Need for Pedagogic Grammar**

“There is evidence (Anderson, 1975; Aitchison, 1987: 92) that both children and adults acquire meanings in a language by working from the prototypical to the less phototypical member of the category.. So the ‘rule of thumb’... may have a sound justification in terms of the psychology of language learning.” (Leech, 1994: 24)

Pedagogic grammatical rules and explanations may help to illustrate a grammar feature and aid language learning, because the problem of grammar is that it may be open-ended. In other words, pedagogic grammar helps learners to sort out the language and provides strategies for coping with input that they would otherwise have to struggle through before gaining insight. Moreover, pedagogic grammars offer simplified hints which may provide learners with starting points in their attempts to organize language because even a short text will contain a vast number of possible study directions. Thus, “use of ‘rules of thumb’... [is] a short cut to an ability which could only be acquired more slowly and tentatively through the inductive method.” (Leech, 1994: 23)

Finally, as the absence of pedagogic rules cause problems for learners, Swan (1994: 54) provides a valuable point for their necessity. He states,

“People who are inclined to be dismissive of popular pedagogic grammars might usefully consider in what form they themselves would like to be given information about quantum mechanics, laser technology... A little truth goes a long way when one is off

one's own ground.”

#### **4.0 Summary**

This paper presented the arguments for the use of authentic texts in the classroom. It discussed how authentic text might increase learner participation, enable learners to self-discover language features and become aware of words and spoken language. The paper also discussed how authentic text might provide alternatives to outdated textbook material and traditional reading comprehension classes.

This paper also presented problems that the use of authentic text creates for learners. It considered these problems against the arguments for authentic text in the classroom and through the need for guidance, simplicity, practice, and pedagogic grammar.

#### **5.0 Future Implications**

As the use of authentic text may advance learners' proficiency, teachers should try, whenever possible, to adapt them in their lesson. Teachers might start with traditional methodology then progress to a methodology that incorporates both traditional methodologies and authentic text induction. As learners advance, more opportunities to learn exclusively through self-discovery may be given.

As learners may be weary of such methodology teachers should try and relate the learner's prior knowledge in new textual situations to help learners make useful generalisations about language. Learners are then assessing what they have already learned and seeing how items can be used in authentic material.

However, it may be necessary for teachers to continue teaching what is considered doubtful and unproductive for language learning and competence to learners that are mainly learning language for the purpose of taking an examination or in societies that feel traditional methods are essential to sustain learner confidence and motivation.

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