

EFFECTIVENESS OF AUTHENTIC MATERIALS IN TEACHING PARAGRAPH WRITING: A CASE STUDY OF TERTIARY LEVEL

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Abstract

This paper concentrates on how the use of authentic materials facilitate different types of paragraph writing in an EFL classroom of tertiary level students at Bangladesh University of Business and Technology (BUBT). It measures the teachers' and students' attitude, feedback on the use of authentic materials while teaching different types of paragraph writing in the classroom in their First Semester's foundation course entitled English Language-1 which is ENG-101. It investigates how tertiary level students perceive the use of authentic materials in the classroom and during the time of using how the students respond and what kind of problems they find while using non-authentic or textbook tasks for classroom activity. The study found that the use of authentic materials facilitate learner's learning success on their writing and these materials are useful for successful paragraph writing and generates positive learning attitudes amongst the learners of tertiary level. The data was collected using different tools and an qualitative method was undertaken by taking a pre-test and a post-test relating paragraph writing, 60 students appeared for the tests, a classroom observation checklist was maintained and an in-depth interview of four (4) teachers were taken to get better feedbacks and reliable outcomes from both the teachers and students at the campus of BUBT.

Key words: EFL (English as Foreign Language), Authentic Material (AM), Learners' Affective Success (LAS), Classroom Positive Attitude (CPA) etc.

Introduction:

According to Tomlinson (1998), authentic materials are those materials which are not produced for any pedagogical purposes inside or outside of the classroom. Nowadays many course teachers are using these sorts of materials. In Bangladesh the use of authentic materials in tertiary level has increased but in primary or secondary level this type of learning techniques are rare. In urban areas authentic materials are not used by the teachers in any case of learning situations. For this reason students are not getting the benefit of learning using new techniques of teaching. In some private and public universities authentic materials are used by the teachers but governmental college, national university and madrasa education are ignoring the use of authentic materials in their teaching. (Rifat, 2015)

According to Harmer (2001), authentic materials are used for the practical use of time, location and people. These materials represent recent events of the real world which are

happening in familiar places and locations. Students may find it easier or they can relate these to their own experience and knowledge in their day to day life situation and appreciate the use of these sorts of materials in their learning situation. Authentic materials serve both the teacher and student well, in that they can offer contexts with which the students are more familiar and also comfortable.

According to, Chavez & Monica (1994:16) in foreign countries there are many scenarios of using authentic materials can be found because the environment is not adverted and teachers are able to apply these types of materials in their courses and students also enjoy reading or learning from these sorts of materials. Teachers use many kinds of authentic materials for speaking, reading, listening and writing skill. They use it in a way that students feel interested to study them.

According to Chavez & Monica (1994:18) authentic materials correlate with learner's motivation and that authentic material motivates learners. They claim that authentic materials are more interesting, vivid and stimulating than artificial, non-authentic materials. These materials also raise attraction to the learners and teachers get better results by using them. The study tried to decide on the positive aspects of victimization authentic materials in teaching paragraph writing to the learners of tertiary level that creates positive angle toward learning within the schoolroom.

Defining Authentic Materials

Authentic materials are 'appropriate' and 'quality' in terms of goals, objectives, learner wants and interest and 'natural' in terms of real world and significant communication.' Guest (2002) Tomlinson (1998) defines authentic texts as materials that are designed for native speakers; they're real text; designed not for language students, except for the speakers of the language. Matsuta (2006) refers to authentic texts as texts that don't seem to be written for pedagogy functions.

Authentic materials is critical since it will increase students' motivation for learning, makes the learner be exposed to the 'real' language as mentioned by Martinez (2002).

According to, Peacock (1997) "The main blessings of victimisation authentic materials are:

- They have a positive impact on learner motivation.
- They give authentic cultural data.
- They give exposure to real language.
- They relate additional closely to learners' wants.
- They support a additional inventive approach to teaching."

Kilickaya (2004) refers that "We will claim that learners are being exposed to real language and that they feel that they're learning the 'real' language. These are what create USA excited and willing to use authentic materials in our lecture rooms, however whereas victimisation them, it's inevitable that we have a tendency to face some issues."

Authentic learning scenario is outlined by Marilyn (2007), "Authentic learning usually focuses on real-world, advanced issues and their solutions, victimisation role-playing

exercises, problem-based activities, case studies, and participation in virtual communities of follow.”

So, faculties and universities across the country ought to attempt to use authentic learning practices and golf stroke the main focus back on the learner in an endeavor to enhance the approach students absorb, retain, and transfer data.(Rifat,2015)

Example of authentic materials

In Bangladesh context there are differing types of authentic materials will be found such as:

Folk songs, Videosongs, Films, Music videos, Tickets, Stamps, Money/Currency, Entertainment connected magazine, Cable TV Programs, Newspaper, News Bulletin, Popular music on Radio, Leaflet, Brochures, Comic series, Business cards, Receipt, Recipe, Pictures and road signs, Internet websites, Cartoon, Different types of product with description, Literature, Article, Journal, Puzzle, Job applications, Advertisements/Circular, Wrapping papers of any product etc.(Rifat,2015)

Authentic Vs Non- authentic materials

Learner's legitimacy means the learner should discover the conventions of communication within the target language which is able to change him or her to bit by bit come back to interpret which means at intervals the text in {ways|ways that|ways in that} which are doubtless to be shared with fluent users of the language. (Merilyn, 2007)

According to Harmer (2001:15) “The legitimacy of the schoolroom could be a special event and surroundings whereby individuals share a primary communicative purpose that's learning. The authentic role of the language schoolroom is that the provision of these conditions within which the participants will publically share the issues, achievements and overall method of learning a language along as a group action.”

Tomlinson (2001) believes that since the contrived materials concentrate on the target type or structure they'll be additional useful to learners though he more claims that if significant exposure to language is aimed authentic materials higher prepare learners. Authentic materials are valuable as a result of they contain cultural aspects and show the scholars the \$64000 samples of language as utilized by native speakers. Made materials are advantageous as a result of they use additional acquainted structures and words. These are additional acceptable once a brand new grammatical structure is to be introduced or bolstered. But there are disadvantages seen for made materials similar to being less fascinating and not introducing universe reading to learners.

Authentic materials could have a positive impact on learner motivation. These materials give authentic cultural data. They supply exposure to real language. They relate additional closely to learners' wants and interests. They support an additional inventive approach to teaching. They supply a good form of text sorts, language designs not simply found in standard teaching materials. In contrast to ancient teaching materials, authentic materials are endlessly updated. They need a positive impact on comprehension and learner satisfaction.(Matsuta,2006)

On the other hand non-authentic materials are produced for in general learners. The language is easy and there are no unnecessary vocabulary is used. These materials do not expose students to comprehensible input at the earliest stages of acquisition. These materials are not culturally biased. For low motivating or average kind of learners these materials are not a matter of burden. (Guest, 2002)

Whenever they need any information they can check out from these materials and they feel much more comfortable. Many structures are mixed in authentic materials; causing lower levels have a hard time decoding the texts but in non-authentic materials learners do not face such kind of problem. The use of authentic materials is time consuming for the teachers but non-authentic materials are not time consuming to the teachers.(Rifat,2015)

Advantage of using authentic materials

There are some advantages are found from different research study of using authentic materials in the classroom learning situation and these advantages are described briefly here:

- Students are exposed to real discourse, as in videos of interviews with famous people where intermediate students listen for gist.
- Authentic materials keep students informed about what is happening in the world, so they have an intrinsic educational value
- Textbooks often do not include incidental or improper English.
- The same piece of material can be used under different circumstances if the task is different.
- Language change is reflected in the materials so that students and teachers can keep abreast of such changes.
- Books, articles, newspapers, and so on contain a wide variety of text types, language styles not easily found in conventional teaching materials.
- They can encourage reading for pleasure because they are likely to contain topics of interest to learners, especially if students are given the chance to have a say about the topics or kinds of authentic materials to be used in class. (Rifat,2015:13)

Rationale of using authentic material in the classroom

The languages of authentic texts are artificial and the languages of these texts are not those languages which we generally use in our real life or day to day life. These types of language do not manipulate the students as the language is too much graded for in general terms. (Rifat, 2015)

But authentic materials like Article, Journal, Leaflet, Brochures, Comic series, Business cards, Receipt, Recipe, Pictures road signs, Internet websites, Newspaper, News Bulletin etc. are used in our real life, every day. We are much known with this kind of language style, structure which helps the learners to learn the language very quickly. But it is also to be noted that the learning success is also depends on the fact that how the teachers are selecting the materials and what type of materials the teachers are choosing for the learners?

If appropriate materials are selected for the proper learners then the success of learning can definitely be increased undoubtedly.

Research Questions

- o How authentic materials can be effectively used in the ESL/EFL classroom?
- o How to utilize the learner's enthusiasm in the period of learning?
- o How authentic materials influence the learning of the students?
- o What was the attitude of the learners while doing the task?

Purpose of the study

The aim of this research is to find out the tertiary level learners' positive attitude towards learning while the teachers use authentic materials in the classroom and also:

~ How authentic materials can be effectively used in teaching paragraph writing in the EFL classroom.

~To utilize learner's enthusiasm in the period of learning.

~ To show that how authentic materials influence the learning of the students.

~As the part of authentic material how cultural content successfully influence their learning.

Literature Review

Asley& Brenda (2002) referred in their article named "Thoughts on the Use of Authentic Material" that "One of the best ways of teaching or learning English as a second (ESL) or foreign language (EFL) is by using authentic materials which have been prepared for native speakers in real-life conditions."

In this study the purpose is to facilitate the learning of the students by using authentic materials in the classroom and preferably it is to be supported that using authentic materials in the classroom is one of the best ways as it is made for natives in day to day life activities.

Chen (2006) in her article named "A Case Study in the Application of Authentic Material Texts: Findings after Using the New York Times Monday Weekly on the United Daily News" that it is therefore easy for the language learners of Taiwan to learn the English language from newspaper article as reading materials and they will get ample opportunities to immerse themselves in a English rich environment as newspaper is a daily readable item in real world. Here this newspaper articles are used as authentic materials for them. Here In this study, the writer strives to figure out the best way to increases learners' interest in the language and relate English instruction to their real world.

Kilickaya (2004) wrote an article "Authentic Materials and Cultural Content in EFL Classrooms" where he found that authentic materials enable learners to interact with the real language and content rather than the form. Learners feel that they are learning a target language as it is used outside the classroom.

This concept supports the fact that AM helps the learners to converse or interact in real life language though content is more focused than the form, yet learning is taking place in a positive way, it should not be forgotten.

David(2005) wrote in the handbook named “Teaching with Authentic Materials “ that Authentic materials bring learners into direct contact with a reality level of English and authentic materials drawn from periodicals are always up-to-date and constantly being updated.

Hwang (2005) wrote in his article named “Effective EFL Education through Popular Authentic Materials” that the problem of overemphasizing English grammar created by the examination-driven education system in Taiwan has long been identified, but there are other deficiencies that curriculum planners are not fully aware of. He gave a redeeming measure that substantial input of authentic materials that are pegged to learners' levels and interests naturally increases their sensitivity to and competence in the target language. Furthermore, current popular materials, such as clips from mass media and best-selling essays/short stories, have been found most appealing because of their realistic, ready-to-use language and relevance to learners' mindsets and experiences.

Research Design

Participants

To complete the study sixty (60) students of tertiary level were taken as participants from BUBT. These students' native language is Bangla and they learn English as Foreign language but the medium of instruction in their education system is English and they have to study everything in English.

Approach:

Qualitative research seeks to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspectives of the local population it involves. Qualitative research is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of particular populations. (Denzin& Lincoln, 2000).So an qualitative approach of research was undertaken in this study.

Instruments:

Interview with the Teachers

In addition to student's questionnaire, the four teachers were interviewed. The interviews were carried out in order to gain insight into their attitudes towards the use of authentic materials in the classroom. The interviews will be compared between the teachers' answers and students' answers given by the questionnaire.

The questions that the teachers were asked related to their view on the use of authentic materials in the classroom, the learning success of the students and the possible feedback they get from the use of authentic materials in the classroom learning situation. (see, appendix-1)

Pre-test and post-test

Finally to find out the original and practical outcome of the findings of the research a pre-test and post-test were taken to those participants who participated in the exams.(See,appendix-2)

Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher followed step by step work to find out answers of the research questions:

Step-1: At first a pre-test was taken to the 60 students of BBA program. It is their first semester.

Step-2: Then using authentic materials the Post-test was taken to the same group of students. The topic was same.

Step-3: Interview of four teachers who teach language courses.

This explanation of interviews and pre-test and post-test were assessed and analyzed in qualitative method.

Results and Discussion

In this section the results and discussion of pre-test and post-test, and interview with teachers are going to be discussed. (see,appendix-1,2)

Interviews with Teachers:

The third section of this study consists of interviews with teachers. It was taken four different interviews of four different teachers of English department. The brief summary of each interview will be discussed here. The questions were asked them regarded interview on the use of authentic materials in the classroom and their feedback are analyzed here. (see, appendix-2).

Teacher – 1 (T-1)

Teacher 1 seems very positive about the use of authentic materials in the classroom. T-1 believes that authentic materials are beneficial for the language learning. When T-1 gives any task from textbook she does not find her students more active. But when T-1 uses any other kind of materials like article, magazine or some other audio visual materials for the students' activity then T-1 finds that her students are much active. They get interested and they do the task very promptly. T-1 also believes that for language learning the use of authentic materials are very effective for the tertiary level students but T-1 also believes that these types of materials should be introduced according to the level of the students and environment of the EFL classroom learning situation.

Teacher – 2 (T-2)

Teacher 2 also believes that authentic materials have positive effect on learner's motivation. T-2 likes to use different types of materials in her language classroom for student activity. T-2 thinks authentic materials keep students informed about what is happening in the world and as a teacher she believes that education has a real purpose to keep the students aware of real life situation and here authentic materials can produce a sense of achievement among them. T-2 also said about the problems with textbook tasks that is it does not often includes incidental or improper English so that the students remain unaware of such English words or sentences. T-2 also believes authentic materials support a more creative approach to teaching and students' learning success gets higher for it. From T-2's observation T-2 has discovered that T-2's students feel more interested and attracted when T-2 does not give any tasks from

textbook which means any other materials except textbook made the students more active in the classroom.

Teacher – 3 (T-3)

Teacher 3 is also very positive about the use of authentic materials in the classroom. T-3 believes that books, articles, newspapers or so on contain wide variety of text types and language styles of these materials are not easily found in conventional teaching materials that means textbook. So use of authentic materials might encourage the students a lot. For writing classes T-3 observed the learning success of his students. T-3 found that authentic materials can motivate students because these materials contain topics of interest to learners, especially if students are given the chance to say about what the topics or kind of authentic materials to be used in class. T-3 also said that T-3 has observed that when T-3 used audio visual materials the students became very active and they gave more attention to do the task. But T-3 mentioned only one disadvantage of using authentic materials and that is sometimes authentic materials may be too culturally biased so unnecessarily difficult to be understood outside the language community.

Teacher – 4 (T-4)

Teacher 4 seems to be more indifferent of the use of authentic materials in the classroom. T-4 mentioned some problems regarding the use of authentic materials. T-4 said he does not like to use authentic materials rather he uses core textbook because the tasks of textbook is designed for all kinds of learners and the total class has a common accordance with the task with each other. T-4 feels that authentic materials sometimes have hard structure and lower level students have a hard time to decode it. But T-4 has observed that when he used magazine for his classroom activity that time half of the students of the classroom were confused about the activity. So T-4 thinks that for the use of these materials special kind of preparation is needed which is very time consuming. The teacher needs a lot of time to prepare authentic materials regarding the level of the students.

Pre-Test (See, appendix-2)

*The subjects of this study are the fresher of BBA program. They have recently enrolled into this program. They all have completed their SSC and HSC and they have had 12 years of education where English was a mandatory subject and they also learned in their secondary and higher secondary level about how to write a paragraph.

*The first 30 minutes the researcher has discussed the basic of paragraph writing and also talked about the types and how to write systematically a paragraph, especially descriptive type of paragraph.

*After that in the next 30 minutes the students were asked to write a paragraph on “Junk Food”.

*They were asked to return the paper at the end.

*While they were writing the researcher observed the class and used the checklist to get important information.

Some Snapshot of Pre-test scripts

Findings of Pre-Test

- The students did not go through brain storming process.
- Most of them were unable to produce topic sentence.
- Sentence construction problem and spelling mistakes.
- Improper description.
- Negative attitude towards writing.
- Lack of motivation.
- Lack of seriousness.
- No idea generation and coherence.
- Did not enjoy writing.
- Conventional style of writing.

Post-Test (See,appendix-2)

- The post-test was taken to the same group of students in the next class.
- The first 30 minutes the researcher has discussed the major problems of their writing about the previous class where a pre-test was taken without using any authentic materials.
- Then the researcher placed some products of junk food, leaflets, food coupons, packets of junk food in front of them.
- The researcher told them to see the stuff and think about for five minutes.
- After that in the next 20 minutes the students wrote a paragraph on "Junk Food".
- Meanwhile the researcher observed the class using the checklist.
- They were asked to return the paper when the time was finished.

Image of the authentic materials used in the Post-test

Some Snapshot of Post-test scripts

Findings of post test

- The students felt motivated.
- They liked the new style of teaching.
- Most of them wrote better topic sentences.
- They felt enthusiastic and the idea generation was better than the pre test.
- They went through brain storming process.
- Opened up with a positive attitude.
- Used good deals of vocabulary due to visualization.
- Though grammatical mistakes and spelling mistakes were present in most of the writings.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Recommendation:

- At first the teachers should go through a need analysis of their students.
- The teacher needs to select appropriate authentic materials.

- The teachers must not choose complex or unknown context related materials.
- The teachers need to teach the basics of paragraph writing and after that they should introduce the idea of authentic materials to the students.
- The students who are a bit weak in English or L2, they need more incentive care while using this strategy in the class.

Conclusion:

The study attempts to find some answers of the questions regarding the use of authentic materials. Through the interview of the teachers, pretest and posttest many answers came out and these are analyzed briefly here. Uses of authentic materials by the teachers show a positive learning attitude among the learners. Learner's attitude reflects learners' ability to do the classroom activities effectively as a result of learners' understanding the teachers' input generated through learners' successful completion of tasks and understanding the lesson in the classroom designed by the teacher. When used effectively, authentic materials help bring the real world into the classroom and significantly enliven the EFL class. Exposing the students to cultural features generates a deeper understanding of and interest in the topic. Authentic materials have positive effect on the learner's learning success because the use of authentic materials seems to be helpful by the teachers for their learning success. They get successful learning when they are getting new kind of materials instead of textbook.

Authentic materials enable learners to interact with the real language and content rather than the form. Learners feel that they are learning a target language as it is used outside the classroom. Considering this, it may not be wrong to say that at any level authentic materials should be used to complete the gap between the competency and performance of the language learners, which is a common problem among the nonnative speakers. This requires the language patterns being put into practice in real life situations. Since learning about a culture is not accepting it and the role of the culture in the materials is just to create learner interest towards the target language, there should be a variety of culture in the materials, not a specific one.

Students feel more active, attracted and lively when teachers use authentic materials. Most of the teachers said that their students feel more interested and attracted when they do not give any tasks from textbook which means any other materials except textbook made her students more active in the classroom. Again from the teacher's interview it has found out the authentic materials facilitates their learning because when they are given authentic material they feel more comfortable. Authentic materials have positive effect on the student's learning and these materials create a sense of achievement among them. It can be said that authentic materials can motivate students because these materials contain topics of interest to learners, especially if students are given the chance to say about what the topics or kind of authentic materials to be used in class.

So from the final results of teachers' interview and pre-test and post-test three major finding have been found that (a) use of authentic materials facilitates learner's learning (b) useful for successful learning and (c) generates positive learning attitudes amongst the learners of tertiary level. But further studies can be done for the future researchers about what types of authentic materials are useful for what types of learners to facilitate their learning and also for the successful learning.

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Appendix-1

Interview questions for teachers

1. When you use textbook for classroom activities how do the students response?
2. When you use audio visual materials how do the students response?
3. What type of materials you use to get your student's learning success?
4. What types of materials make your students more prompt in their classroom activities?
5. Did you observe your learners' learning success when you use authentic materials?
6. What is your opinion about the use of authentic materials in the classroom?

Appendix-2

Pre Test Question for students:

Write a paragraph on: Junk Food

Post-Test Question students:

Write a paragraph on: Junk Food