

Incorporating Authentic Materials into English Language Lessons

Laura Payne

Abstract

本報告書は、言語教育におけるオーセンティック・マテリアル（実際の素材）の定義を説明し、言語学習の向上および、母語話者が使用する実用的な英語を学生に体験させることを目的とした、授業での活用方法に関する実践的なアドバイスと例を提供する。特に、オーセンティック・マテリアルと教科書などの非オーセンティック・マテリアルを取り入れた授業の設計と計画についてアドバイスを提供する。本報告書に含まれる例やアドバイスは、日本で大学生に英語を教えた際の筆者の個人的な経験に基づいており、網羅的なものではない。本報告書の目的は、英語の母語話者と効果的にコミュニケーションを取るために必要な英語の応用を学生に学ばせたいと考えている語学教師に、提案やインスピレーションを提供することにある。

Abstract-

This report explains the definition of authentic materials in language education and provides practical advice and an example regarding how to utilize these materials in lessons. In particular, this report offers advice on how to design and plan lessons that include both authentic materials and non-authentic materials such as textbooks. The example and advice contained in this report are based on the author's personal experiences teaching English as a foreign language to university students in Japan. The example and advice provided in this report are not exhaustive. The contents of this report are meant to provide suggestions and inspiration to language teachers who want to expose their students to real-world applications of English, the understanding of which is necessary to communicate effectively with native speakers.

Introduction-

In language education, the term “authentic materials” can be used to describe anything that demonstrates real-world use of a language. Typically, the target audience of these materials is native speakers of a language. Thus, authentic materials are usually created to fulfill a purpose outside of language education. Some common examples of authentic materials include movies, TV shows, songs, news articles, and books published in a target language for purposes such as entertainment (United States Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs). Materials such as language textbooks, conversely, are not usually considered authentic materials because they utilize language that is scaffolded for the purpose of education. This is helpful for introducing concepts to students and providing structured practice, but it can also cause the language in textbooks to differ from real-world applications. If teachers hope to prepare their students to use a target language in real

life contexts apart from classrooms and tests, language lessons must include both authentic materials and non-authentic materials.

An abundance of unfamiliar language points and cultural references can make authentic materials intimidating for students, which is why it is necessary to utilize these materials mindfully in classroom activities and curricula. Mindfully applying authentic materials requires three considerations in the lesson planning stage:

1. Identifying themes or language points that students will learn through non-authentic materials such as textbooks.
2. Searching for authentic materials containing language or cultural points that supplement information introduced via the non-authentic materials.
3. Determining where and how to include authentic materials in a lesson based on the information and materials gathered in the previous two steps. Authentic materials could be the focus of a lesson, but they could also play a minor role (Payne).

Below is one example of how this planning process could be applied in an English language lesson.

Example-

One theme of Unit 3 of the textbook *Globe Trotters – Practical English with Video* is staying at a hotel. Conversation activities in this unit introduce English vocabulary and expressions used to check in to hotels and ask hotel staff about available amenities. This unit's vocabulary is noticeably limited, however, in regard to describing types of hotel rooms. The textbook introduces the terms “single room” and “double room,” but does not include any other expressions for types of hotel rooms (Lieske, 24 – 25). Native speakers use many more terms when reserving or speaking about hotel rooms such as “queen room,” “king room,” “suite,” and “dormitory.” There is also an abundance of terms used to describe different types of accommodations in English besides “hotel” such as “motel,” “resort,” and “hostel.” The textbook’s omission of this vocabulary provides an opportunity to supplement students’ language knowledge with authentic materials.

After identifying the lack of terms, a teacher might decide that the goal of a lesson based on Unit 3 is to introduce, understand, and use vocabulary that describes accommodation types and room types. With this goal in mind, a teacher can begin searching for authentic materials that introduce these terms. English-language accommodation websites or booking websites, for example, use these terms to advertise themselves to potential customers and communicate the kinds of rooms that are available

for reservation. Paper pamphlets, brochures, or magazines do something similar.

For the sake of this example, imagine a teacher decides to include the website of a hotel, the website of a resort, the website of a hostel, and the website of a motel in their lesson. At the start of the lesson, a warmup activity could be held to review the language introduced in Unit 3 of the textbook. After this warmup, students begin an activity using the aforementioned websites to expand their vocabulary. A teacher might distribute a worksheet that features the definitions of key terms such as “suite,” “king room,” or “resort” and blank spaces that are missing vocabulary words (See Figure 1). After providing the links to the aforementioned websites, the teacher might ask the students to work in pairs or small groups and look at the English websites to find the vocabulary words that match the definitions on their worksheets.

Figure 1

	A room that has one king-sized bed
	A room that has one queen-sized bed
	A room with many beds that many different people share
	A room that is similar to a small apartment with bedrooms and a living room
	A place to stay that has more amenities than a hotel and is more expensive
	A place to stay that is cheaper than a hotel and has fewer amenities
	A place to stay that is cheaper than a hotel, has fewer amenities, and is often next to a main road so people who are traveling by car can easily stay here
	A place to stay that could be cheap or expensive depending on the amenities, but is usually more expensive than a hostel or motel

After providing the students with time to find the answers on their own, the teacher can confirm the vocabulary words that match each definition and explain cultural points related to some terms (i.e. the fact that motels are common in the United States because many people travel by car in this country). If the teacher believes that students require more practice to understand the definitions of these terms, students could do extra activities where they match vocabulary words to pictures (See Figure 2).

Figure 2



When the teacher feels that students understand these new vocabulary terms, students can return to the textbook and try the Travel Adventures conversation activities with partners or small groups. They could start by answering the Travel Adventures questions (using their new vocabulary words to answer the questions) and move on to practicing the script for checking in to a hotel, changing some parts of the conversation to make use of the vocabulary they have just learned (24-25).

Conclusion-

Non-authentic materials such as textbooks are good at introducing basic language concepts to students, while authentic materials can expand students' knowledge of these concepts by introducing language and cultural points that textbooks do not mention. Incorporating both types of materials in language lessons offers students the chance to develop well-rounded, practical language skills and become used to how native speakers use a language in real life. Moreover, with careful lesson planning and guidance from a teacher, authentic materials can become accessible learning tools for students of varying proficiency levels. In short, authentic materials are essential tools for any teacher who hopes their students will use a language in real life.

References

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