



UNDERSTANDING AUTHENTIC MATERIALS FOR ESL CLASSROOMS

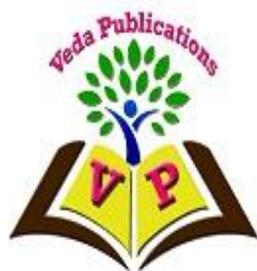
Sanjay K. Jha

(Director and Professor, Amity School of Liberal Arts and Foreign Languages, Amity University Haryana.)

Email: doctorskj@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT



This study has three prime objectives. Firstly, it aims at understanding what an authentic material is. Secondly, it aims at exploring effective authentic materials that are widely used in global and local ESL classrooms. Thirdly, it delves into identifying essential components of authentic materials that make them authentic. As part of findings, the study found 36 authentic materials that are widely preferred by ELT practitioners in ESL classrooms. In addition, the study has identified eight essential components of authentic materials which an ELT practitioner needs to incorporate in the development of effective authentic materials for language learners of different proficiency levels.

Keywords: Authentic materials, Essential components



1. What is authentic material?

Authentic materials (AMs) are any materials that bring real-life communication for the students in ESL classrooms. However, it is imperative to emphasize here that authentic materials are not normally deemed imperative for their inclusion in the syllabus, but they are imperative part of ELT activities. In other words, the AMs are not supposed to be instructed rather, they are supposed to be exposed to the learners for instinctive and joyful learning. In Indian scenario, the few ESL classrooms use authentic materials for effective teaching-learning of English language. After the advent of dot.com world, authentic materials drew the attention of all the stakeholders and different language learning websites, software/system, books, etc. opened up great avenues of learning a language through a

plethora of authentic materials. As a result, today, learning a foreign language has become easier than ever before. This study has three sections. Firstly, it identifies the types of realia which are used for authentic materials in global and local ESL classrooms. Secondly, it delves into identifying essential components of authentic materials that make them authentic or real. Thirdly, it aims at proposing a conceptual framework of authentic materials for all levels of ESL students.

2. Types of Realia Used for Authentic Materials

The following figure-1 depicts 10 major types of realia that are available mainly in two forms: *print* or *electronic*. The further classifications have been made based on their functionality, platform, and appearance.

Types of Realia Used for Authentic Materials (RAM)

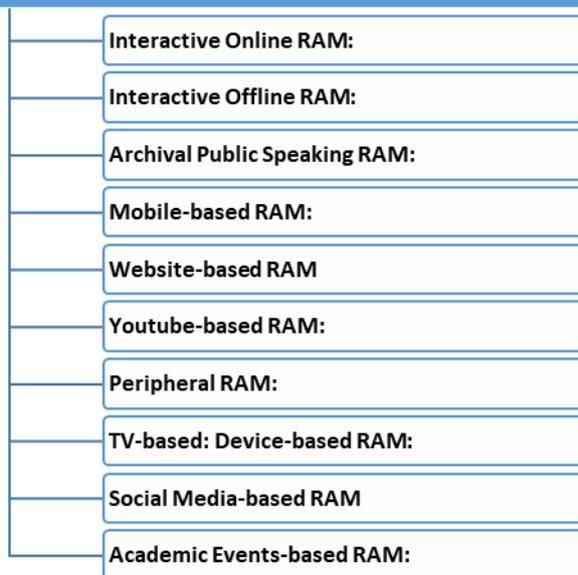


Figure-1: Types of realia used for authentic materials



The figure-1 above shows that realia of authentic materials can be of 10 types. The following are brief accounts of each realia.

1. **Interactive Online RAM:** The interactive online RAM covers those learning materials which are available online in interactive form such as Babbel, Roseta Stone, Headway, English for You, englishclub.com, etc.
2. **Interactive Offline RAM:** The interactive offline RAM covers those interactive learning materials which are available mostly offline forms such as Face to Face, Headway, English for You, etc.
3. **Archival RAM:** Most of the archival realia are available in both printed and electronic form like Magazines, Newspapers, Comics, ESP and EOP Books with Situational Dialogues and Collocation, Wordwise Dictionary by Longman Press etc. The electronic archives include materials especially for effective public speaking like ted.com, cassandraworthy.com, brittanyhodak.com, jayber.com, etc.
4. **Mobile-based RAM:** The mobile-based RAM includes those learning materials which run on android-based applications such as news items, earbud.fm, podbean.com, etc
5. **Web-based RAM:** The web-based RAM includes websites that keep on modifying their learning materials to suit the needs of learners such as e.g.fluentu.com, escafe.com, etc.)
6. **YouTube-based RAM:** The YouTube-based RAM includes video materials like Easy English, Real English, VOA Learn English, Rachel's English, Speak English with Mister Duncan, etc.
7. **Peripheral RAM:** The peripheral RAM includes learning materials available as leaflet, pamphlets, posters, billboards, maps, greeting cards, recipes, resume, report cards, bills, menus, product manual, etc.
8. **TV & Audio Player-based RAM:** These are the materials that use TV and Audio player devices for their disseminations like Peppa Pig, Sesame Street, short movies, Hard Talk, Guinness World Records, That's Incredible, Linguaphone, Languagepod101, FSI Language Courses, Podcasts, Audio Books of Short Stories, etc.
9. **Social Media-based RAM:** These are the materials that are available on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc.
10. **Academic Events-based:** These are the recorded materials of events like seminars, webinars, FDPs, EDPs, CPDs, workshops, Talks, symposiums, conferences, etc.

3. Essential Components of Authentic Materials

Authentic Materials were further studied in terms of their distinctive features and the study found eight essential components of AMs.

The following are brief descriptions of the aforementioned eight generic components of authentic materials.

**(I) Contextual Communication:**

Communication is as much required in a human's life as air and water and contextual communication is a vital component that helps us understand and live in different social contexts. The notion of social context encompasses different social environments and situations in which we are expected to speak and behave in a certain manner. For instance, if somebody is interested in doing a job in corporate sectors, s/he will have to acquire certain behavior pattern, body language, and nuances of oral and written communication. Similarly, one working in army is obliged to observe certain communicative norms and forms of the army world. If someone lacks contextual communication, s/he will find it hard to make a good professional rapport with fellow colleagues and continue with the job. Such an effort grooms learners not just on linguistic aspects but also on cultural aspects and makes learners learn the conversational etiquettes and body language (Jha, 2020). Thus, CC should be made imperative component of authentic materials.

(II) Communicative Lexicon:

The purpose of learning a language is to be communicative or to communicate in that language to get across our messages to the listeners. And, to be communicative, the learners need to be made aware of communicative words. Here comes the need of including communicative lexicon as part of authentic materials. The learners of English is not supposed to cram one million words of English lexicon or dictionary. A person, who is well proficient in speaking or writing English, knows around five to six thousand words only (Kucera, 1993). These are

the common words that we call communicative words which are extracted from the spoken and written corpus based on their higher frequency of occurrence especially in spoken communication (Jha, 2013).

(III) Collocational Lexicon

It is often observed that many learners have a very good stock of vocabulary, but they fail to use them in real life situations. The reason is *a word without co-text and context is merely a pretext as a word does not have its meaning in isolation; rather, a word acquires its meaning in relation to its co-text and context* (Jha, 2019). And, here comes the need of collocational lexicon for the learners. By definition, collocation is a sequence or grouping of words that come often than by chance because of cohesive nature of one word with another word(s). The purpose of having collocational lexicon as part of authentic materials is to provide a database of collocation to the learners who learn grouping appropriate words appropriately for real life communication.

(IV) Practicum based

The rationale behind making authentic materials *practicum-based is to see every student emerging as a good ELT practitioner. In doing so, ESL teachers are expected to customize their session plans in such a way that could foster an opportunity of at least 15 hours of English Language Teaching by students to their peers or in outside-ESL classrooms.*

(V) Captivating Contents

Most of the authentic materials are less designed to give linguistic instructions or inputs to the learners and more designed to be captivating in such a way



that the learners feel immersed in the real world situations and hooked to the learning materials.

(VI) Performance Oriented:

Being performance oriented is a vital component for an authentic material in that it makes learners perform and respond in desired languages. In performance-based AMs, students perform activities that are meaningful and engaging. Performance oriented AMs help learners become creativity and innovative [to solve linguistic as well as real life problems.](#) Performance-based activities are often done by creating exhibits, debates, and by preparing portfolios.

(VII) Learner-centric (LC):

Being learner-centric is another vital component of an authentic material. With the notion of LC, learners are expected to create and communicate language on their own. The classroom content that is not centred around students, and where students are not able to see the relevance of the tasks they are completing to their lives outside of the classroom, can act as "one of the most demotivating factors for learners" (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011: 116; Kikuchi, 2015). The AMs, with learner-centric approach, prepares students to acquire new knowledge and skills. Thus, an based authentic material helps teachers know how learners learn. The LC lessons are often executed with the help of multiple intelligences. As students have different strengths, learning styles, and learning potentials, MI backed AMs help learners excel not just in one skill or any particular intelligence like reading or writing but it aims to develop different intelligences like linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, spatial

intelligence, bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence, musical intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, naturalistic intelligence, and intrapersonal intelligences (Jha, 2020).

(VIII) Need-based Authentic Materials (NAM):

Including need-based activities in an authentic material is of great prominence. With the help of need-based authentic materials, learners are encouraged to carry out meaningful tasks like appearing for an interview, meeting bank officials for financial transaction, meeting airport officials to undergo immigration check, talking to officials in taxi booth for hiring a taxi, calling customer service for help, ordering a consumer product through online shopping, ordering food through Zomato, Swiggy, etc.

CONCLUSION

This study is an endeavor to present important associated facts about authentic materials. In doing that, the study has firstly identified 10 types of realia used for authentic materials. Secondly, the study has identified eight essential components of authentic materials. Finally, the study has proposed a conceptual framework of authentic materials which can be used as a tool for developing effective authentic materials for all levels of English language learners. Thus, this study aims at optimizing learning outcome with maximum use of authentic materials for ESL learners.

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